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THE WORKS OF ANATOLE FRANCE  
IN AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION  
EDITED BY THE LATE FREDERIC  
CHAPMAN AND JAMES LEWIS MAY  
PREFACES, INTRODUCTIONS,  
AND OTHER  
UNCOLLECTED PAPERS



LIBRARY EDITION

THE WORKS OF  
ANATOLE FRANCE  
IN ENGLISH

*Edited by*

THE LATE FREDERIC CHAPMAN  
AND

JAMES LEWIS MAY

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THE BODLEY HEAD

P R E F A C E S,  
INTRODUCTIONS  
AND OTHER UNCOLLECTED PAPERS  
BY ANATOLE FRANCE

TRANSLATED, WITH A  
FOREWORD AND NOTES  
By J. LEWIS MAY



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## FOREWORD



ATHER more than a year ago, Monsieur Michel Corday collected, and presented to the public, a series of dialogues, some more or less complete, others little more than notes, on which Anatole France had been working just before his death. Monsieur Corday, who was an intimate and most devoted friend of the great writer, accompanied these fragments with an illuminating commentary designed to demonstrate the scrupulous care, the conscientious labour which Anatole France brought to bear upon any subject of which he proposed to treat. Monsieur Corday also took occasion, with touching and filial devotion, to defend the memory of his friend against the malicious attacks which political prejudice or

religious animosity had not hesitated to level against him even before his body had been laid in the grave. In the task to which Monsieur Corday set his hand with such becoming zeal, he has been aided by a sure and invincible ally. Time has completed what Monsieur Corday began, and it is no exaggeration to say that the reputation of Anatole France stands higher to-day, not only among his own people, but also, and perhaps more particularly, in countries other than his own—certainly in England and America—than ever it did before. Anatole France speaks not merely to a section of humanity, but to all—old and young, exalted and humble, learned and simple.

Only a few, in the long roll of the world's great writers, possess this quality of universal appeal, this power of awakening in the hearts of men of every age, of every condition, of every country, the irresistible echo of

The still sad music of humanity.

What the essence of this quality is, it would not be very easy to define. It is of the heart rather

than of the head. Such as have been fortunate enough to possess it, if their brows were gilded by the stars, have had their feet firmly planted on this common earth, the nursing Mother of us all. They knew the *lacrimæ rerum*, "the sense of tears in mortal things." They understood, if they did not share, the weaknesses and failings of ordinary common humanity, and made generous allowance for them. Perhaps this elusive and indefinable quality is, after all, no more than Humour—that blend of Tears and Laughter, of Irony and Compassion—but Humour brought, as the mathematicians say, to its highest power. Be this as it may, the thing is easy to recognize, if difficult to define. Shakespeare, Dickens, Charles Lamb possessed it, each in his own sphere. Pre-eminently, and almost alone among his own countrymen—certainly among his own contemporaries—Anatole France possessed it. He was, indeed, and in a wider sense than that which is usually given to the word, a great humanist. He was steeped in erudition, but no one ever bore his mantle of learning with an easier grace or entertained



a more lively abhorrence of the pedant. Supreme as he was as an artist in words, he was no mere literary craftsman. To him Life was ever of infinitely more importance than Literature. The consuming passions which inspired him, were his love of Beauty, his detestation of shams and hypocrisies, and greatest, perhaps, of all, the pity and indignation which flamed in his heart at the wrongs inflicted by the powerful and the selfish on silent, suffering humanity. This it was that made him a socialist ; this it was that impelled him to quit his Tower of Ivory, where dwelling in solitude, looking on with a smile half of amusement, half of compassion, at the tragedy-comedy of life, he had put the magic flute to his lips and held the world spellbound with the beauty of his meditative strains.

Some life of men unblest  
He knew, . . .  
. . . his piping took a troubled sound . . .

This pity for his fellow-men, this and this alone, it was, that sometimes lent a barb to his usually gentle irony, and momentarily—

but only momentarily—obscured the winning countenance that we see, with our mind's eye, as we turn the pages of such volumes as *My Friend's Book*, *Little Pierre*, *The Bloom of Life*, *The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard*.

It is small wonder then, and calls for no excuse, that we should diligently glean the stubble field to bear to the granary whatever ears of corn the harvesters have failed to gather in.

Almost everything that Anatole France wrote is golden and bears upon it the inalienable impress of his genius. For it is a peculiar attribute of the products of genius that, although they are truly universal, though they soar triumphantly free of the trammels of the provincial or the regional, though they are untainted by any suspicion of mannerism or affectation, though, in a word, they are invested with all the grave dignity of the "grand manner," they are—paradoxical as it may seem—intensely and unmistakably individual. This is true of Renan, for example, and of Newman ; it is true also of Anatole France.

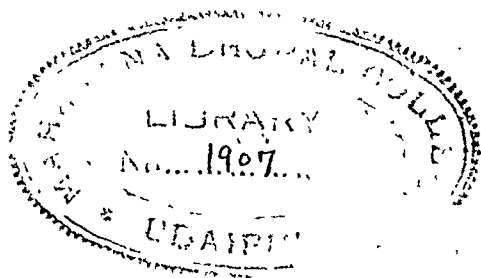
Hidden away in the files of newspapers and reviews, there are many articles by Anatole France which, with the careless indolence that was one of his conspicuous characteristics, he made no attempt to rescue from oblivion. In addition to these, there exists a vast number of prefaces and introductions to books by other authors. One day, perhaps, some pious and diligent bibliographer will succeed in making a complete list of these fugitive pieces which now lie hidden away in the "dark unfathomed caves" of great public libraries, among the lumber of dead newspapers and forgotten magazines. Some of these I myself have dragged from the "unsunned heap." I have taken them at random, as they came to my hand, and they are here presented without any attempt at arrangement save a roughly chronological one.

I have headed each article with a short note mentioning the source from which it was derived, and giving any further particulars concerning it which I considered might be of interest to the reader.

In addition to my indebtedness to Monsieur Michel Corday—to which I have already referred—my acknowledgments are due, and are here gratefully recorded, to the following : M. Alphonse Lemerre for the essay prefixed to the *Anthologie des Poètes français* ; the Bibliothèque Charpentier for the preface to M. Paul Ginisty's *Année Littéraire* and to M. Nicolas Ségur's *Naïs au Miroir* ; MM. Perrin et Cie. for the preface to M. W. G. C. Byvanck's *Un Hollandais à Paris en 1891* ; the Société d'Édition *Les Belles Lettres* for the preface to the French translation of Sir James Frazer's *Sir Roger de Coverley* ; MM. Arthème Fayard et Cie. for the preface to *Les Heures Latines*, by Mademoiselle Simone de Caillavet ; the Nouvelle Revue Française for the preface to Marcel Proust's *Les Plaisirs et les Jours* ; the Comité P. L. Courier of Tours for the speech delivered by Anatole France at the Paul Louis Courier Centenary Celebrations ; Mr. Holbrook Jackson for the Essay on Stendhal ; the Librairie Fischbacher for the preface to *Mentis* ; MM. Calmann

Lévy for the preface to *Jeunes Madames* ;  
MM. Stock et Cie. for the preface to *La  
Finlande* ; the proprietors of *La Revue de  
Paris* for the essays on Victor Hugo and  
Ernest Renan.

J. LEWIS MAY.



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AN ESSAY ON FRENCH POETRY

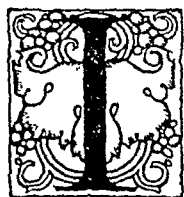


*The following essay on French poetry is prefixed to an Anthology of the French poets from the earliest times to the end of the eighteenth century, published by Alphonse Lemerre. It was written about the same time as the essays which Anatole France subsequently collected and republished in the volume called "The Latin Genius," or perhaps somewhat earlier.*

AN ESSAY ON FRENCH POETRY  
FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE END  
OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

I

THE TENTH TO THE TWELFTH CENTURIES



It was a slow and tranquil process which at length brought the French, Spanish and Italian languages almost simultaneously into being. Among the Gallic peoples of the tenth century, the corrupt and scattered elements of the Latin tongue had been welded together anew into a speech called the *lingua romana rustica*, which was, as it were, the chrysalis of the French language. It was in this rustic Romance dialect that the *Chanson d'Eulalie* was composed. It is impossible to say, since we have no other remains with which to compare it, to

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which group this little song, remarkable only on account of its great antiquity and its prosody in which the quantitative basis still survived, should be assigned.

The Romance language did not follow identical lines of development both North and South of the Loire. In the Midi, its growth was rapid ; it swiftly became gracious and musical with a wealth of clear vowel sounds. The troubadours, of whom many a one was a *grand seigneur*, composed love-songs in this language, which echoed with infinite sweetness throughout the south of France and was even heard in Italy until the end of the twelfth century. The decline of Provençal song was as sudden as its growth. However, we are not here called upon to consider this elder sister of French poetry, this sister so fair, so gay and so brilliant, yet doomed, withal, so soon to wither.

North of the Loire, the language that was born of Latin was of a strikingly different nature ; stiff, unresonant and rugged with hard consonants. The poetry to which it gave

utterance was inspired by the heroic ideals of Chivalry and by the adventurous spirit of the Crusades. The troubadours sang of mighty sword-blows dealt or received for the glory of Christ or the honour of their lady-loves. The *Chansons de Geste* sing of these exalted themes. They are written, at least the earliest of them, in lines of ten syllables. This is the metre of our earliest epics, but the rhyme is only marked in them by assonances repeated in an indefinite number of lines. Included in this Anthology are two couplets from the *Chanson de Roland*. An examination of their prosody will reveal the fact that the verse-structure of the *Chansons de Geste* differs from that of modern poetry not merely in the weakness and indefinite repetition of the rhyme—a characteristic to which we have already alluded—but, also, in the treatment of the hemistych. The troubadours looked upon it as a line-ending ; that is to say, they placed at the cæsura a mute “ e ” which has no metrical value, even when it is not elided before another vowel.

This custom, though altogether foreign to

the modern poetry of Ronsard, Corneille or Victor Hugo, is not unpleasant to the ear. It is quite otherwise with the prolonged iteration of assonances. That impresses us with a sense of wearisome monotony. Moreover we regard it as responsible for the blemishes and barbarisms which disfigure the work of the later troubadours.

We have thought it well to draw attention to these technical matters. Their significance will be apparent to everybody who refers to the explanatory notes on prosody prefixed to the present volume.

The earliest cycle of *Chansons de Geste* is the cycle of Charlemagne. In it we shall find no record of the deeds performed by the great Emperor, nor shall we discover any account of the manners and customs of his times. What the troubadours *do* give us, and that with a fidelity all the greater for being unstudied, is an account of the manners of their own epoch, of life as it was lived in feudal times.

In their primitive artlessness, their profound simplicity, and their epic grandeur, the *Chansons*

*de Geste* are akin to the *Iliad* and the *Ramayana*. These characteristics of primitive work, which are so noticeable in the *Chanson des Lohérains*, in *Raoul de Cambrai*, in the *Chanson d'Antioch*, and in the *Chanson de Roland*, are not observable, to the same degree, in the cycle of *King Arthur and the Round Table*. The latter, which is of Celtic origin, portrays manners of a milder type and a less ignorant state of society. In it, historic events are more clearly understood and more faithfully recorded, than in the Carolingian cycle. The poems of this group are, for the most part, written in octosyllabic verse. Such are the *Brut* and the *Rou* composed in the middle of the first century by Robert Wace, a clerk of Normandy, and the *Chevalier au Lion*, written somewhat later, by Chrétien de Troyes. Another, and definitely circumscribed, cycle, the cycle of *Alexandre*, came into being in the twelfth century, during the revival of learning. It is made up of long stories concerning the Trojan War, Alexander the Great and Julius Cæsar. These tales would have no interest save for the student of

language, were it not for the vivid pictures they furnish of the manners and customs, not indeed of heroic Greece, and Imperial Rome, but of the feudal world under Philippe Auguste and Richard Cœur de Lion.

## II

### THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

In the thirteenth century the *Chansons de Geste* began to decline. The material was exhausted. There were, however, troubadours who, though without imaginative gifts of their own, busied themselves with the production of insipid variations of familiar themes; they narrated the old fables over again and with incredible prolixity. Thus *Garin le Lohérain*, which was written about the middle of the twelfth century, was, somewhere about the year 1250, reproduced in a much expanded version consisting of some twenty-nine thousand lines. Not that there were no new epics in the thirteenth century. *Girard de Nevers* by Gilbert de Montreuil, *Parthénopea de Blois*

by an anonymous troubadour, *Beauvon de Comachis* and *Aimeri de Narbonne* by the famous Adenès le Roi, are originally works of a more romantically imaginative character than their predecessors. But the action is obscured beneath a mass of redundant and colourless detail. Nothing ever comes to a point in these insipid productions. *Aimeri de Narbonne* consists of more than seventy-five thousand lines. The *Roman du Saint Graal* is almost as long.

The latter touched on some of the most cherished of Christian beliefs. The San Graal—the Holy Grail—was the cup to which Jesus put His lips on the first Easter day. Joseph of Arimathea, who had possessed it, had beheld such wondrous evidence of its virtues, that the Knights of the Round Table, the companions of King Arthur, braved the most perilous adventures in order to win back so priceless a relic. Of these adventures, the *Graal* recites the story.

This was the century which witnessed the creation of the line of twelve syllables, with the cæsura coming at the sixth. It was known as



the "alexandrine" because it was employed by the troubadours of the cycle of *Alexandre*.

The octosyllabic line was used in the *romans*, or allegorical poems, which are the outstanding invention of the thirteenth century. The most famous is the *Roman de la Rose* begun by Guillaume de Lorris, who died about 1260, and completed by Jehan de Meun, nicknamed Clopinel, that is to say, "The Sloucher" (a meaning which still survives in the expression *clopin-clopant* used of one who walks with a clumsy, uneven gait). This work, elegant in style and refined in sentiment, is a lengthy allegory of twenty-two thousand lines, wrought by the first author with a uniform grace, and completed by the second in a style more rich in fantasy and distinguished by greater abandon and spirit than had marked the work of his predecessor.

This poem, which achieved so great a vogue, as well as *l'Art d'aimer*, by the troubadour Guiart, and the rhymed versions of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, by Philippe de Vitri, Bishop of Meaux, found, in the châteaux of the Barons

of Louis IX and Alphonse de Poitiers, many a gallant and witty reader by whom the elegance of the phrasing and the subtlety of the allusions were fittingly appreciated.

During the same period, a woman, Marie de France, put into verse several fables, taken in part from Æsop. The *Roman du Renart* is, in itself, merely a string of delightful fables. They are very skilfully interconnected and have lost none of their savour and freshness for the modern reader. Imagine the Lion, the Wolf, the Fox, the Ass and various other of La Fontaine's heroes, brought on the stage in a number of scenes following one another in ordered sequence, all linked together in a chain of adventures, and you will have a rough idea of the *Roman du Renart*. Unwilling as we are to depart from custom, it may be well to remark, in passing, that we ought to speak of the *Roman de Renart*, Renart being here the proper name, or, if you will, the surname of one of those crafty animals which the Latins called *Vulpes* and our forefathers *goupils* (whence *goupillon*, fox's tail, which we still

employ). But it was the glory of the "goupil" of the fable to give his name "Renart" to the whole species. This "roman," brimming over with good humour and radiant with light, was a popular work and in great favour with the middle classes. Fables, turned out by tatterdemalion troubadours, composed the literature of the humbler folk. Some of them were very gay ; others no less sombre, as, for example, the tales of Rutebeuf.

### III

#### THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES

In this unhappy fourteenth century, our popular and national poetry is nought but a series of laments and songs of war. The song of the *Combat de Trente* is full of sombre grandeur, and the reader will find, in their proper place in this Anthology, those lines, so artless and so dolorous, in which an unknown Norman singer bewails the loss of the joyous bard Olivier Basselin, who had been done to death by the English. The vein of the epic had now given out. Ended were the *Chansons*

*de Geste* (save for one, and a very belated one, on Du Guesclin) ; the long fables were over and done with ; but of ballades and rondeaux there was no stint.

Froissart the Chronicler, Eustache Deschamps, Alain Chartier, Christine de Pisan, Charles d'Orléans are pastmasters in the art of chiselling those poetic gems, with their complex symmetry of structure. Doubtless the whole thing smacked not a little of artifice ; yet what feelings of delight are ours when we chance upon a sentiment of marvellous truth, a thought of wondrous delicacy, amid this maze of verbal filigree. Charles d'Orléans is especially rich in such surprises.

As for François Villon, he too was a maker of rondeaux and ballades, but the delicate framework of these poems snaps asunder in his sturdy hands. His utterance is strong, his versification unfettered. His work abounds in finished pictures and natural touches.

The theatre originated in the sanctuary. Long before the twelfth century religious dramas were performed in the churches. The

stage was first of all the choir, it was occasionally transferred to the baptistry, the gallery or the calvary. Later on plays were enacted in the precincts, on scaffolding erected for the purpose. It was thus that the Mystery of the Resurrection, of which a fourteenth-century version has come down to us, was presented to the public. From that version we learn that the stage was divided into three stories ; and that the uppermost of these represented Heaven ; the middle one Jerusalem with its dwellings, Calvary and the Holy Sepulchre ; and the nethermost, Hell. The *Grand jeu de la Passion* was arranged by Michel, Bishop of Angers, in order to co-ordinate in a single work, the favourite scenes of the old mysteries. Such were the origins of French Tragedy. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Passionist Brothers, lay clerks of Paris, set up a theatre in the Great Hall of the Hospital of the Trinity, where they gave performances of mystery plays and farces. They subsequently removed to the Hôtel de Bourgogne which, after their day, became the birthplace of the

most brilliant dramatic *chefs d'œuvre* of the seventeenth century. They had been in the air ; one could feel them coming, those *chefs d'œuvre*, ever since the days when, in the reign of Louis XI, the *Farce de Pathelin* had been given to the public ; for that farce is pregnant with comic power.

## IV

## THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

When the French crossed the frontiers of Italy with Charles VIII at their head, they cried, " Behold the Earthly Paradise ! " Their wonderment, to which the letters of Briconnet and Charles VIII himself bear witness, gave place, at least with some of them, to patient study, to dogged toil, and France was filled with " learned folk, very accomplished preceptors and well-stocked book-shops," as Rabelais has it, Rabelais who contributed as much as, nay, more than, any other, to the Renaissance in France. As for Italy, that Land of Light, she had experienced her poetical

renaissance as far back as the fourteenth century, with Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, who found the memorials of antiquity better preserved in their country than anywhere else ; but the *Chansons de Geste*, translated or imitated, as well as the Songs of the Troubadours, were the living sources of their inspiration. Thus France had been an instructress before she, in turn, became the pupil. She did not suddenly grow forgetful of her ancient metres. The poets of Louis XII were still quite Gothic in character, and Clément Marot himself, in the reign of François I, displayed, side by side with a thoroughly Gothic style, a great enthusiasm for the *Roman de la Rose*, which he modernized, and for the works of François Villon, which he edited. The King's sister, Marguerite d'Angoulême, thoroughly imbued as she was with the poetry of Italy and vastly taken up with anything that was new, nevertheless wrote mysteries, rondeaux and allegories quite in the old, traditional style.

It was reserved for the Pléiade to break with

the past and to have direct recourse to antiquity. The Greeks had bestowed the name Pléiade on the constellation of the seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione. They applied it, in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, to a group of seven illustrious poets, among whom were Theocritus, Aratus, Nicander and Lycophron. In France, Ronsard formed another Pléiade with Joachim du Bellay, Antoine de Baïf, Dorat, Remi Belleau, Jodelle and Pontus de Thyard. The best of the seven, next to Ronsard, that is to say, Joachim du Bellay, sets forth in his *Défense et Illustration de la langue françoise*, the ideas of the whole group. Their task, which later on was misunderstood and condemned, was to raise the French language from the status of a vulgar tongue, which men of learning then considered it, to the status of a literary language. That is what Dante did for Italian. In the course of his efforts, he invoked the aid of Virgil and Statius. The poets of the Pléiade also based their enterprise on an imitation of antiquity.

“I cannot,” says du Bellay, “sufficiently



blame the stupid arrogance and temerity of certain members of our nation, who depreciate and wave aside, with a glance of more than stoical superiority, everything that is written in French. If our language is neither so copious nor so rich as Greek or Latin, that should not be imputed to it as a fault, as if, from the nature of the case, it could never be aught than poor or sterile ; much rather ought we to ascribe it to the ignorance of our ancestors.

“As for me, if I were asked what I thought of our best French poets, I should answer that they wrote well, that they imparted a lustre to our language and that France is beholden to them ; but I should also certainly add that, if some learned man would but set his hand to it, he might discover in our language a form of poetry far more exquisite, the which should be sought among those old Greeks and Latins, not among French authors, for among them there is but little we might take, nought, so to speak, but the skin and the colour ; but, in the case of those others, we may take the flesh,

the bones, the nerves and the blood. And if there be anyone so hard to please that he will not take these reasons as sufficient, I would remark that, as regards other arts and sciences, mediocrity may deserve its proportionate meed of praise ; but, 'as touching the poets, neither gods nor men have ever suffered mediocrity in them, which is in accordance with the opinion of Horace. Read, then, and read again, before aught else, O future poet, turn their pages by night and day, the pages of the Greeks and the Latins, then quit me of all that old French poesy, *nouveaux, ballades, vyrelaix, chants royaux*, songs and other such kickshaws which corrupt the taste of our language. But throw thyself with a will into the fashioning of witty epigrams, after the manner of a Martial or some other well-approved poet. Distil, in a style that is flowing and not crabbed, those mournful elegies, after the manner of Ovid, Tibullus or Propertius, mingling therewith on occasion some antique fable, no small adornment of poesy. Chant me those odes, as yet unknown to the Muse of France, to a lute in harmony with the Greek or

Roman lyre, and let there be no line wherein there appeareth not some trace of rare and antique lore. As for epistles, 'tis not the sort of poem that could greatly enrich our common folk because, of set purpose, they treat of familiar and homely things. And likewise I would say to thee concerning satires, which the French, I know not wherefore, have called *Cogs à l'asne*, wherein I counsel thee to try thy hand but sparingly, as I would have thee to hold aloof from evil-speaking unless thou wouldst, after the manner of the ancients, under the name of satire and not with this appellation of *Coq à l'asne*, administer a modest rebuke to the vices of the day, sparing the names of those who practise them. Sing me those beautiful sonnets, an invention showing no less skill than charm. Sing me, on tuneful pipe or well-turned flute, those pleasing rustic eclogues, after the manner of Theocritus and Virgil. And as for comedies and tragedies, if the Kings and Republics are fain to restore them to their ancient dignity, the which hath been usurped by farces and moralities, I deem

it well that thou shouldst employ thy hand thereat and, if thou wouldst so do for the adornment of thy language, thou knowest where thou mayest find the archetypes. And therefore thou who, being endowed with an excellent felicity of nature, instructed in all good arts and sciences, not ignorant of the affairs and duties of human life, being neither of too lofty a condition on the one hand, nor abject nor poor on the other, not vexed with domestic matters, but living in repose and tranquillity of mind, thou, I say, being adorned with all these graces and perfections, if thou hast any pity for thy poor language, if thou designest to enrich it with thy treasures, verily it will be thou who wilt make it lift high its head, and, with undaunted brow, take rank among the proud languages of antiquity" (Du Bellay).

The poets of the Pléiade addressed themselves to this task with varying gifts and powers. Old Jean Dorat, their master, scarce wrote aught save in Latin, and, consequently, helped them but little. Amadis Jamyn was indebted

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for his inclusion in the constellation of the Pléiade less to his own genius than to his friendship with Ronsard. Pontus de Thyard was a conscientious disciple, and no more. Moreover, he early abandoned poetry for the Church. Baïf wore himself out with vain experiments : his aim was to introduce classical metres into French poetry. Belleau, "le gentil Belleau," excelled, with less effort, in songs imitated from Anacreon. Jodelle essayed to give a Sophocles to France : that, as we have seen, also was included in du Bellay's manifesto, but Jodelle, who composed with regrettable haste, never wrote anything worth reading. Du Bellay, on the other hand, wrought some admirable sonnets and some first-rate satires.

As for Ronsard, he is an incomparable lyricist. Ideas, language, imagery, rhythms, everything that he created was instinct with a grandeur and a grace which we appreciate the more as our familiarity with them increases; and at the same time we may quote a sonnet by this great poet, such as : *Quand vous serez bien vieille*, or an ode such as : *Mignonne, allons*

*voir si la Rose*, which have all the naïve artlessness of popular poetry and could be sung to rustics in the countryside.

He was swiftly eclipsed by the perfection of the poetry of the age of Louis XIV, whereof he laid the foundations by the sturdiest labours ever poet set his hand to ; a perfection that would never have existed without him. As for the objection that he introduced too many Greek and Latin words into the language, that is a fault which attaches to the sixteenth century as a whole, and not to him in particular. So far from this being the case, he rescued more than one old word whose existence was threatened by his contemporaries. One of his sayings in this connection has been preserved for us by d'Aubigné, and an excellent one it is.

“ ‘ *My children,*’ he used to say to the young people, who listened to him as to an oracle, ‘ *defend your mother against those who are fain to make a menial of a lady of good lineage. There are words which are natural and fine French words which smack of old times, but which are simple, withal, and honest French. I bequeath*

*to you this advice : suffer not these old words to be lost ; use them, and defend them boldly against those knaves who see no elegance in anything unless it be bristling with Latin and Italian, and who would rather say collander, contemner, blasonner than louer, mépriser, blamer.' "*

If anyone is to be justly blamed for the introduction of outlandish expressions, over-emphasis, bad taste and excessive Latinisms, that person is du Bartas, much rather than Ronsard. It was not Ronsard but du Bartas who invented the frequentatives *babattre* and *pépétiller* ; it was du Bartas who called the sun *le duc des Chandelles* ; it was du Bartas, again, who made excessive use of compound words such as *baise-nue, casse-bois, aime-pleurs*. However, du Bartas, who was a Gascon Calvinist, owed his tremendous reputation to the emphatic gravity of his verse ; but that reputation did not outlive him.

In striking contrast to du Bartas, another Calvinist left behind him a poem of remarkable and enduring vitality, and that was Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné. His work is unequal and

unpolished, but he possessed extraordinary power, and was capable of putting forth alexandrines that sped swiftly and unerringly to their mark.

Two disciples of the Pléiade bring the Renaissance period to a close. They are Desportes and Bertaut. Their verse is still the verse of Ronsard, and yet it is almost the verse of Corneille. They enable us more clearly to realize all that the thankless Malherbe owed to Ronsard.

## V

### THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

One day Malherbe, when looking through the poems of Ronsard, struck out half of them. When it was pointed out to him that some day he would be looked on as having approved of the verses he had not obliterated, he took his pen and struck out the rest. That was in the days of Henri IV. Respect for rules and regulations was a quality well adapted to minds that had at length found peace beneath the



sceptre of a great man. Malherbe, being of an exact turn of mind, took poetry under his authority, and old Ronsard fell into unmerited neglect, from which he was only rescued by the Romantics of 1830. Malherbe, as a poet was dry, crabbed and barren. Under his influence, the language of poetry lost its amplitude, its grace, its bravery and its simplicity. But some one had to lay down the law ; the most exacting was the most readily obeyed, and that was Malherbe. He prepared men's minds for the cult of ordered beauty.

There are two distinct phases in the seventeenth century. The first, which dates from Louis XIII, or rather from Cardinal de Richelieu (for he had a part in it), is arrogant, hyperbolical and, so to speak, altogether the perfect grandee ; its gallantry is heroic and its heroism gallant. When a Boisrobert writes in this manner, we are conscious of something slightly ridiculous ; but when it is a Pierre Corneille, we reach the sublime. *Le Cid*, which was censured by the budding Academy, ushers in the era of dramatic masterpieces.

Style, arrangement, characters, everything is beautiful, everything is grand in this tragedy, as it is also in *Cinna* and *Polyeucte*, which follow it. Rotrou deserves mention with Corneille, though he was far from attaining his eminence.

The second phase in the poetry of the seventeenth century dates from the majority of Louis XIV. It includes some of the finest masterpieces that the human mind has produced. Such are La Fontaine's Fables, where every manner is employed in turn, with sovereign ease and supreme felicity, to make up one vast and marvellous picture, "a Comedy in a Hundred Acts." Such are the tragedies of Racine, the poetry of which, in its noble sedateness, has no rival save the poetry of Virgil, and which illumines with the magnificence and truth of its creation, one of the greatest moments in the history of the human mind; such, finally, are the Comedies of Molière, which display such freedom of style, such strength, such grandeur, such perfection of beauty, that no other writer can challenge comparison with him.

Boileau was the friend of La Fontaine, Racine and Molière ; he lived in their company, he understood, loved and supported them, and, if he was far from attaining their level, he at last composed some epistles and a heroic-comic poem in which their influence is plainly manifested. I should not mention his *Art poétique*, were it not that it gives me occasion to remark that the France of Louis XIV had lost all recollection of its literary origins. In Boileau's eyes, everything prior to Malherbe was but chaos, cacophony and wilful irregularity. Nevertheless this same Boileau taxes Ronsard with having thrown everything into confusion. It is not easy to see what Ronsard could have thrown into confusion, when no order existed. It is probable, however, that Boileau had not read twenty lines of Ronsard.

Quinault, to whom this same Boileau was so dear, created lyric drama and wrote some *operas*, which can be read with enjoyment, apart from the music, because they are genuine tragedies, written in a style of lofty purity.

The succeeding age is the age of prose. In

it poetry declines. As a comic writer, Regnard, though excellent and free, nowhere approaches the greatness and truth of Molière. Voltaire treats tragedy as a medium for the unfolding of philosophic theories. His art is abstract, his characters lifeless, his style colourless. Crébillon, his rival, is sometimes more tragic than he, but for the most part his work is marked by roughness and puerility.

None of the rest are worthy of mention.

Voltaire attempted, as Chapelain had done a hundred years before him, to give an epic to France, but the *Henriade* is a frigid amplification on which the introduction of a rhetorical ghost lays the final and fatal touch of frost. On the other hand, he excelled in the lighter kinds of poetry, and wrote some very charming minor verse.

Saint Lambert, the Abbé Delille and Roucher cultivated poetry of the descriptive order, which, in the second half of their century and in the opening years of our own, enjoyed a favour that has since given place to disdain. Nevertheless, despite the over-pretentious style

and the roundabout periphrases which disfigured it, descriptive poetry marked a step towards the romantic school.

At the end of the eighteenth century, André Chénier, who, on his mother's side, was a Greek, drew from the perennial sources of antiquity fresh inspiration and a novel style. He imparted a new suppleness to the French language, restoring to it many old words to which he gave new life and charm. But he published none, or scarcely any, of his poems, and his contemporaries, who knew him not, confined their reading to little boudoir poets whose productions were wholly insipid and artificial.

A thunderbolt demolished them all ; the Revolution broke out. Voltaire, in his plays, had given an example of philosophic poetry which, without his gifts of style, became the poetry of the Revolution. Those were the days when Marie Joseph and Lebrun Pindare gave utterance, in ode or in tragedy, to a windy, strained mode of speech whose emphasis, unbearable as it often is, occasionally, as in

certain hymns such as the *Chant du Depart*, attains a lofty eloquence.

In the concluding year of the century, Ducis introduced some fresh elements into dramatic compositions. He was an ineffective writer. It was a pale Shakespeare, but Shakespeare all the same, whom this diffident innovator brought upon the French stage.

## VI

### THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Two great names, towering high above all others, dominate the sombre literature of the Empire, and those two names, Chateaubriand and Madame de Staël, are connected with poetry only by reason of their fruitful influence on poetic production. While these two great minds were creating a new world of thought and feeling, such people as Esménard Chenedollé, Parseval-Grandmaison, were giving utterance in an impoverished tongue to an ideal worn threadbare beyond the possibility of restoration. Millevoye, the feeble Mille-

voye, found no very new accents in which to utter his laments, laments that were, nevertheless, sincere and touching. Louis Nepomucène Lemercier introduced some rather daring novelties into the drama, and conceived the idea of a satirical epic ; but in his case also, the language was lacking.

At length, at the decline of the restoration, in 1820, there appeared, in the *Méditations* of Lamartine, something quite fresh in sentiment and expression. In these *Méditations* the poetry, so long waited for, flowed forth in copious streams ; the sentiments of the “ children of the age ” had found, after a prolonged interval of expectancy, the mode of expression that was natural to them. Public enthusiasm was unprecedented, and nothing could equal the intoxication and the sweetness of this dawning hour of romanticism.

This word “ romanticism,” which has already been several times set down here, cannot properly be defined, because the ideas which it represents are multifarious and contradictory. The abandonment of the pseudo

antiquity of the tragedies ; the return to a Middle Age which was certainly more recent, but assuredly quite as artificial ; the mingling of styles, in imitation of the German poets ; and, in the Drama, the disregard of the unities ; a tendency to lyricism—such are the features of romanticism. It has been said that it meant freedom in art, but that does not tell us much. When, in his old age, Corneille, who, great man as he was, had a terribly crafty and subtle mind, kept laying down rule after rule for the sole pleasure of putting himself under their tyranny, he was also free. Victor Hugo, in the preface to his *Cromwell*, drew up the manifesto of the new school of which he was to be the leader. The document is instructive, although infinitely inferior in understanding and in knowledge to the *Défense et Illustration* of du Bellay.

“ Poetry,” says Victor Hugo, “ has three ages, whereof each corresponds to a certain stage of social evolution : the Ode, the Epic, the Drama. The primitive ages are lyrical ; antiquity is epic ; and modern times are dramatic. The ode sings of eternity, the epic



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celebrates history, the drama portrays life. The characteristic of the first is *naïveté*; of the second, simplicity; and of the third, truth. The rhapsodists mark the transition between the lyric and the epic poets, just as the ballad-writers are the link between the epic and the dramatic poets. The poetry of our day is, then, the drama; the note of the drama is reality; reality results from a natural combination of two types, the sublime and the grotesque, which interact in the drama as they interact in life and in creation" (Preface to *Cromwell*).

Without dwelling on the theory of the three ages of poetry, a theory to which the facts will not always accommodate themselves, we perceive that Victor Hugo regarded romanticism as a return to truth, wherein he erred. *Hernani* is certainly not more true, not even so true, as *Andromache*. And what is termed the truth of an ode, or a *ballade*, or a *méditation*, is something wholly elusive.

The strength of romanticism was elsewhere; it lay in the rejuvenation of the poetic

language ; in the creation of new forms of verse, at once less rigid, and yet stronger, than the old ones ; in the daring which shattered the ancient moulds, and in the genius which took life as the subject-matter of its inspiration.

Alfred de Vigny and the brothers Deschamps were, together with Victor Hugo, the Romantics of the first period. Soon Sainte-Beuve brought to the *cénacle* (the word is in harmony with the spirit of the age) that critical sense which it lacked, and some poems of a peculiarly intimate and individual character. Musset was a late-comer to the vineyard. Indolent, given to mockery, he was, nevertheless, so richly gifted that, though he treated it all as a pastime, his contribution was perhaps more full of life, and certainly more happy, than that of any of his fellows.

After a fierce struggle, the Romantics scored an overwhelming triumph. The Academy capitulated. Such is the fate of all fortresses that wish to avoid destruction. Then, about 1848, a partial reaction set in, marked by the fairly conspicuous success of

the common-sense school which, on the stage, was represented by François Ponsard and Émile Augier.

However, there were some poets who would not renounce the wealth of diction and inspiration for which their predecessors had fought and won : Charles Baudelaire, Théodore de Banville and the heroic Leconte de Lisle, “ who wrought in gold,” as a contemporary put it—all these carried on, though they transformed them in the process, the ideals of the Romantic school.

These poets became, by reason of their talent, the natural patrons of the new school known as the Parnassians, a school which won its way, whatever its detractors have said about it, by its love and respect for art, and which gave to the world some names that are still held dear.

A DUTCHMAN IN PARIS IN 1891

There are travellers who, when they visit a foreign city, owe it to their good fortune or to their determination that they see everything and everybody worth seeing. Monsieur W. G. C. Byvanck, to whose "Un Hollandais à Paris en 1891," the following is a preface, seems to have belonged to this favoured class.

# A DUTCHMAN IN PARIS IN 1891

By W. G. C. BYVANCK



HERE must assuredly be, in the little town of Hilversum, where the wool and cotton weavers ply their looms, one of those Dutch ovens in which, as in Descartes' day, the wise man immures himself in order to pursue his meditations. For M. Byvanck, who dwells there, beneath a soft and humid sky, is an erudite and thoughtful man whose familiarity with books has not turned him aside from the study of his fellow-men and who, learned philologist though he is, takes a lively interest in the progress of ideas. His intellectual outlook extends far beyond the meadows, the canals and the windmills amid which he lives, and, in the silent watches of the night, his spirit

roams over the divers countries of the world and surveys anew the track of time. M. Byvanck has published some critical essays on François Villon of which our Villonists speak in the highest terms. These essays reveal a profound acquaintance with our early language and literature. On the first page of one of them the name of Jean Richepin occurs in close proximity to that of François Villon. Nor does the association of these names imply any affectation on the part of M. Byvanck, who knows the poets of our time as well as those who lived in the days of Charles VII and Louis XI.

In a notable work which he entitles *La Poésie et la Vie au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, M. Byvanck has studied the influence exercised by society and morals on the literature of Europe, over a period which embraces the life and work of Heinrich Heine, Carlyle, Cardinal Newman, Balzac, Baudelaire, Hebbel, Clough, Emerson, Walt Whitman and Henrik Ibsen.

He is at present completing a book on the social and religious movement in Holland at

the beginning of this century ; he is preparing a critical edition of two of Shakespeare's plays, *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* ; and he is setting his hand to studies of French poetry in the fifteenth century and the dialects of the Romance peoples. The possessor of such a mind, contemporary with every century, a fellow-citizen of every poet and every scholar, is no stranger in any country of glorious tradition, and we need be in no way surprised that M. Byvanck, during the few months he spent in Paris, should have made such progress in familiarizing himself with men and things.

I will go so far as to say, if you will trust the word of a Parisian who loves his Paris as an Italian of the Middle Ages or of the blessed fifteenth century loved his native town or city—I will go so far as to say that M. Byvanck, endowed with that hereditary feeling for truth which animates all Dutch art, discovers and depicts, with the exactitude of a Téniers, all the literary nooks and corners of the capital—cafés, brasseries, the rural retreat of the *chansonnier*, the garret of the learned poet,



where the folios climb upon the chairs even as those monstrous creatures the prehistoric denizens of the earth "who would fain shun the light of day." You may readily imagine that this scholarly Téniers would have no great inclination to study belles-lettres in the Salons, or eloquence at the Academy. The commentator of the *Grant Testament* is happier on the Boulevard Saint-Michel, in the café where he will encounter a new Villon. M. Byvanck had a good evening at the *Chat-Noir*, listening to Alphonse Allais, Georges Courteline and Maurice Donnay, who shed their subtle wit and their divine spirit of fantasy over the proceedings. They keep a school of wisdom there, teaching us, with a grace recaptured from Aristophanes, to scorn the mock virtue and the shoddy talents of the prosperous ones of this world and to laugh at the foolish, the malevolent and the hypocritical. This cabaret is a great and beautiful school of morals. The charming poets of the *Chat-Noir* profess irony and pity, which, of all the human virtues, are, when one comes to think of it, the only exquisite and

innocent ones. They have no respect for cabinet ministers and senators ; but they respect the poor, and they are socialists without violence and without hatred. M. Byvanck has too much wit not to enjoy himself at the *Chat-Noir*. The *Mirliton* is rowdier and rougher, but it charmed him. The *Mirliton* is that café on the Boulevard Rochechouart where you can listen to Aristide Bruant, the singer who was the first to express the pathos of the underworld. This redoubtable bard of the wanton, the pimp and the thief amazed the philologist of Hilversum as he has since astonished Mr. Oscar Wilde, who professes to be astonished at nothing.

Moreover Aristide Bruant manages to give his poetry and his person a uniform character, an original physiognomy, and to throw himself, body and soul, into playing the complete *canaille* with a perfection unattained before save by a few Greek cynics and, better than any other, by that Diogenes who was, in his lifetime, the most amusing of works of art.

During his stay in Paris, M. Byvanck seems

to have constantly enjoyed that good fortune which favours the two cronies in the theatrical reviews and brings them on the stage in the nick of time, when there's something exciting going to happen. Our learned Dutch gentleman has only gone a yard or two along the Boulevard des Italiens when he falls in with Catulle Mendès. And forthwith the poet delivers himself of an ingenious discourse and, like Alcibiades with the flute players, enlivens the banquet of letters with subtle and learned observations on the laws of rhythm and the trials of the flesh. M. Byvanck sits him down at a table in a café, and lo, in comes Paul Verlaine and sits down alongside him, so weary, so mysterious, and his eyes shining so queerly, that he seems like one just home again from regions where no traveller had ever been before him. Similarly, towards midnight, going up the Boulevard Saint-Michel and leaving the ruined palace of the pious Emperor Julian behind him, he inevitably runs into Jean Moreas, magnificent and imperturbable, and gathers up the cameo-like utterances of that

Pindaric poet, an eloquent manifesto to which it behoves us to add the fiery coruscations of Charles Maurras, if we would gain a complete idea of the æsthetics of the younger school. And Chance, or some good genius, is always favouring M. Byvanck. Is he dining with friends? Then Maurice Barrès is one of the party: Maurice Barrès, rarest and most delicate of talkers and a past-master in the use of gentle irony. It was a happy inspiration that led our Dutch friend to call upon M. Marcel Schwob, who writes such good stories, who is so well acquainted with the old French tongue, who is so richly endowed with humour and philosophy.

M. Byvanck has made a careful record of the things M. Marcel Schwob said to him, and he has succeeded in putting them down on paper with all the force and glow with which they were uttered, without losing any of their movement. We find in this book other very interesting conversations, among them one with Jules Renard, the most sincere of the naturalists, concerning Flaubert and questions of style.

M. Jules Renard will have it that a sentence ought not to sing, and the reason he gives is that we must be natural. He omits to prove that it is more natural to speak than to sing. And he could hardly look to the birds and the lyric poets for confirmation of his proposition.

We must also note a consultation with M. Richepin on J. K. Huysmans and J. H. Rosny, and an interlude with M. Léon Cahun on the Janissaries and the Mongolian soldiers of the thirteenth century. This diversion suddenly interrupts, with the clash and glitter of steel, the peaceful course of the literary drama. It is a sort of Ballet of Swords.

As touching the theatre, M. Byvanck, who finds the Human Comedy sufficiently entertaining, is very little of a play-goer. But happening once to find himself at the Odéon, he there saw M. de Porto-Riche's *Amoureuse*, and here again we may certainly say that his luck was in. M. de Porto-Riche has the notes of depth and truth ; he brings to the theatre an atmosphere of sincerity hitherto unknown. He is sensual and melancholy, he is tender and

disillusioned, he is violent and delicate, and he gives his characters a living soul and words which go to the heart and rend it. Like M. Byvanck, I am glad to be at the theatre when anything by Porto-Riche is being acted there.

It is also interesting to go with him to the studios of Carrière, of Claud Monet the painter, of Rodin the sculptor, and there, among the impressionist canvases and lifelike casts, to talk about art and the new ideal. Diverting and fruitless discussions that will go on for ever ! Sublime frivolities ! We know no more to-day about the laws of art than the troglodytes of Vezere, who with a flint scratched on a piece of bone or ivory the forms of the mammoth and the reindeer.

In recording all these discussions concerning art and letters, M. Byvanck has put his soul into the task, a soul that is gentle and kind, pious and moral, guileless and learned, and indomitably hopeful.

## L'ANNÉE LITTÉRAIRE

*The following is an introduction, distinguished by Anatole France's characteristic blend of learning and humour, to the seventh volume of Monsieur Gimisty's well-known series of literary surveys.*



# L'ANNÉE LITTÉRAIRE

BY PAUL GINISTY



FOR seven years M. Paul Ginisty has been the annalist of French literature, and he fulfils that great task with a fairness, a knowledge and an elegance that are truly admirable.

The collection of his excellent *Annuaire*s will be very valuable to the compilers of that *Literary History of France*, begun by the Benedictines of Saint-Maur and continued by the members of the Institute, when, in the distant future, that work comes to deal with the writers of the nineteenth century. That, according to M. Ernest Renan, one of the contributors, will be some five hundred years hence. If those worthy gentlemen, the Académiciens des Inscriptions, who are now

entrusted with the task of compiling this vast History of Letters, are endowed with foresight and take thought for the morrow, they will not fail to keep in reserve a carefully varnished copy of M. Ginisty's books for the use of their successors in the twenty-fourth century. M. Paul Ginisty will be of the greatest service to these learned men in assisting them to form their estimate of our literature for the period 1885 to 1892. To be quite frank, I do not know what views people will hold concerning our literature five or six hundred years hence, or, indeed, whether they will deign to entertain any views about it at all. I do not share the confidence which posterity generally inspires in the minds of those who bow to its verdict in advance, under the impression that it will confirm their own. Posterity is composed of men and women, and that is quite enough to make me feel a little uneasy ; for we have seen and noted that error clings to the human race with all the tenacity of an old and trusted friend. Nor can I quite appreciate the reasons which should prompt us to expect from the

future a wisdom which is assuredly not fore-shadowed by the present.

It must further be borne in mind that posterity is indifferent and ill-informed, and that it is more especially by reason of these two qualities that it succeeds in establishing in public opinion that species of unanimity which invests it with a semblance of majesty. One of the strangest pretensions of literary arrogance is the claim to write for the future, and to address one's works to a coming race of whose manners, tastes, character and sentiments we can hazard no conjecture. It is more sensible and much safer to speak to our contemporaries, if it so happens that we have aught to impart to them.

As we turn over the pages of this book, in which the works in prose and verse published in 1891 are analysed by M. Paul Ginisty in concise and highly intelligent articles, we cannot but be scared at the quantity of ideas committed to paper every year ; nor can we help fearing lest our contemporary literature should soon perish completely, smothered

beneath the avalanche of its own abundance. How is one to exercise one's choice among so vast an assemblage of books in which talent is so liberally displayed? We can hardly suppose that the printer guarantees an indefinite life to all this *copy*. Those little yellow books of ours are not made to last long. In less than a century they will all be crumbling into dust.

Nor do we know whether many will be reprinted before this inevitable destruction overtakes them.

The bibliographers tell us that since the invention of printing, a vast multitude of books is known to have vanished into oblivion. They have made a list of them, and the list would be a longer one if they could have included in it the books of which all trace has been lost and of which not even the names survive.

And yet those old books, printed on paper and bound in calf or sheepskin, withstood, better than ours will do, the wear and tear of time.

Our foolscap octavos perish in a few days, in the boxes of the book-pedlars, on those learned stone parapets that fringe the Seine, where the theology of the seventeenth century and outworn controversies, in their thick leather covers, hold their own for long months against scorching sun or corroding mist. Anyone who makes a habit of rummaging in the twopenny box, may measure the vanity of our essayists and philosophers in all its plenitude.

So far as I am concerned, it was there that I acquired the sentiment of the frailty of books, and thus it was natural that it occurred to me just now to recommend the zealous librarian to have a varnished copy made of the *Année littéraire*. A book thus treated has some chance of surviving. The practice of varnishing books would be more useful, or at any rate more harmless, than the manufacture of melinite. But man finds it less interesting, for he is a violent animal. And this violence, which is dying out so slowly, adds much to the uncertainty which enfolds the destiny of our

books. Howbeit, we must not be afraid of the future, which can neither be much better nor much worse than the past from which it springs. What we should find particularly comforting is that the nations have need of some measure of order and tranquillity merely to live. All the prophets of evil have been belied in the long run, and their lamentations make us smile, after the event.

In the greatest social catastrophes, invasions or revolutions, there is a certain limit of evil that is never exceeded. The society of the future will doubtless be neither much more vicious nor much more unhappy than our own, nor even very different. It will probably be more democratic and more utilitarian. In this matter M. Charles Richet has made some forecasts, based on statistics, which have a good deal to be said for them.

We may doubt whether our literature will suit this society ; but there is no reason to hold that a democracy is bound to treat every kind of literature with contempt.

There exists among the masses a just appre-

ciation of ideas and of the expression of them which our middle classes seldom exhibit.

Do not let us make the mistake of proclaiming the end of all things. On the other hand, do not let us count on a speedy return of the Golden Age. Rather let us make up our minds that the man of to-morrow will behave himself with as much gentleness as is possible in a carnivorous animal endowed with powers of reflection and living in the midst of his fellows. He will know Latin no more, but he will speak a language which, after all, will still retain some remnants of French in its composition, and which will enable him to give expression to love and hatred. What more could we hope for amid our ceaseless social vicissitudes and the eternal flux of all things ?

Meantime, let us congratulate M. Paul Ginisty on having devoted his labours to a department of history in which he has a better chance of recording facts of importance than if he wrote the daily chronicle of our political activities.

The historians relate that in 1748 the

English were compelled by Dupleix to raise the siege of Pondicherry, and that, five months after that check, France, Holland and England concluded the second Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. These are notable facts. The same year, Montesquieu published his *Esprit des lois*, and that, it will be readily conceded, was something more notable still.



# NAÏS AU MIROIR

*Monsieur Nicolas Ségur is a young author of mingled French and Greek parentage who was an habitué of Madame de Caillavet's Salon in the Avenue Hoche. His book is a study of the life of an Athenian courtesan somewhat in the manner of Pierre Louys' "Aphrodite."*

# NAÏS AU MIROIR

BY NICOLAS SÉGUR



NICOLAS SÉGUR, who, like André Chénier, is of mingled Greek and French descent, was reared on that soil which saw the birth of Beauty and Wisdom, and which, withered, stricken, downtrodden, is now, after lying so many centuries dead, at last coming to life again. He was young when he came to France, and of our ideas, our struggles, our trials and our meditations, none were unfamiliar to him. He threw himself with zest into the literary arena and made his mark there ; and now he has given us a truly splendid picture of the courtesans of Greece and the philosophers of Athens, which he has entitled *Naïs with her Mirror*. Naïs, his Nais, is the daughter of

the Naïs, or Thaïs, who followed Alexander the Great into Asia. Her father was the son of Philip, or of a Thracian neat-herd—which, we do not know, nor does it matter. She flourished at Athens in the days when Demetrius Poliorcetes, the son of Antigonus, received from the Athenians the honours due to Pallas, protectress of the city, and took up his abode in the Parthenon which resounded with the music of flutes and of singing. Naïs was considered one of the three most beautiful courtesans of the city, and was even accounted supreme over all her rivals (so at least our author avers) in the perfection of her hips. And as in the case of the amphora, it is not so much the neck or the foot, as the rounded belly which determines the beauty of the whole ; so it is by virtue of the magnificence of her thighs that one woman takes precedence over another. We may say that Naïs was the most desirable of all the Athenian women, since she was endowed with the hips of an immortal goddess. And therefore it was that suitors thronged the threshold of her dwelling. She selected the

handsomest and the richest among them. Nais was pious, and we behold her consecrating to the goddess "her saffron veil, her green chaplets of ivy, her silver mirror, while it was yet cloudy from the warmth of her body," even as Praxo who made divers gifts to Cypris.

Ce voile transparent, de mode lesbienne,  
Praxo te le consacre, Ô Cypris auranienne !  
Avec lui, ce miroir de bronze, égal et clair,  
Ce réseau trois fois teint des couleurs de la mer,  
Et ce peigne de buis que dans sa chevelure  
Longtemps elle traîna d'une main lente et sûre,  
Comme un pêcheur traînant un filet hors de l'eau ;  
Ce peigne, ce miroir, ce voile et ce réseau,  
Elle te les consacre avec joie, Ô Déesse !  
Car le rire amoureux, la facile richesse  
Sous ta ceinture d'or ont leur secret autel,  
Et l'éclair est moins vif et moins doux est le miel,  
Que les plaisirs divins goûtés par ta servante.\*

Naïs, also, expert at giving pleasure, knew likewise how to enjoy it. Her historian assures

\* This transparent veil, worn after the Lesbian fashion, Praxo consecrates to thee, O heavenly Venus ! and with it this brazen mirror so smooth and bright, this net thrice dyed with the colours of the sea and this boxwood comb which through her hair she draws with slow and certain hand, even as a fisherman drawing his fishing-net out of the water ; this comb, this mirror and this net she doth consecrate to thee with joy, O Goddess ! for the laugh of love, and the yielding riches beneath thy golden zone are not without their secret altars ; and the lightning is less keen and honey less sweet than the divine pleasures whereof thy servant doth taste.

us of that, and it is a great point. The skilful pen of Nicolas Ségur must tell us all about the matter one of these days.

The Greeks cultivated the Art of Love with a care and a skill unknown to those barbarians who, after the death of the great god Pan, took over the sceptre of the world.

Their courtesans were given, like the geisha girls of present-day Japan, an extensive and complicated education. Under the names of Gymnastics and Music, they acquired all things calculated to adorn the mind and the body.

And so it is that Nicolas Ségur takes pleasure in gathering, as they fall from the lips of his Naïs, all those maxims which are of a nature to initiate us into the mysteries of that true voluptuousness whose frontiers march with the domain of wisdom. "Real voluptuousness depends not solely on the body. It has need also of the soul, ay, and more than that, it compels the procession of the Arts to follow in its train—the glories of poetry, rhythm and music."

The episode, which concludes and sets a

crown on the story of Naïs, is the love which the courtesan inspires in Polemon the Sage. This Polemon, the son of Philostratus, has his place in the history of Philosophy. He was an Athenian of the deme of Cœa. In the heat of early youth he abandoned himself to pleasure. One day, in company with some young and dissolute companions, he, being drunk, and wearing a wreath of flowers upon his head, burst into the school of Xenocrates, the philosopher, who appeared to take no notice and went on with his teaching. Polemon, struck with the bearing and discourse of the Master, followed his lessons, became his disciple, and succeeded him in the teacher's chair. He reformed his character, and gained such a mastery over himself that his countenance never betrayed the slightest emotion. He lived alone, shut up within his garden, robed, says an ancient writer, in the purity, the gravity and the severity of his master.

Such was the man who succumbed to the charms of Naïs.

How the story ends I shall certainly refrain

from disclosing. When you have read the grave, voluptuous pages which will reveal it to you ; when you have fallen beneath the spell of a narrative which to me seems strangely reminiscent of a myth of Plato, it will be permissible for you to meditate upon Eros and Anteros, and peradventure, like Heraclitus of old, you will say, with a delicious melancholy, " Life and Death are but one and the same thing."



## FINLAND

*Though Anatole France looked forward to the establishment of what he called the United States of Europe, he was keenly interested in the fate of the smaller nations and indignantly resented any tyrannical repression of their domestic independence and national characteristics. The two ideas may at first sight appear paradoxical. They are of course only superficially so. The cause of Finland, eloquently pleaded by Monsieur René Puaux, was, as might be imagined, one which appealed irresistibly to Anatole France.*

# FINLAND

## A THREATENED NATIONALITY

BY RENÉ PUAUX



IN the pages which follow, M. René Puaux has set forth clearly and accurately the true facts about a great cause, a cause which, being that of a nation, should interest all nations, if indeed there really be such a thing as human solidarity.

Everybody knows that after the Russo-Swedish war of 1808-1809, Finland retained, under the authority of the Emperor of Russia, Grand Duke of Finland, its own institutions and customs, its national life. In his Imperial Edict, dated June 5-17, 1808, Alexander I gave out that in uniting Finland to Russia, "he solemnly undertook to maintain the laws and the privileges of the country." On March

15-27, 1809, he no less solemnly made good his promise. "It is our intention, by the present act, to confirm and ratify the fundamental laws of the country, as well as the rights and the privileges which each class in particular, in the said Grand Duchy, and all the inhabitants in general, whatever their position, whether great or lowly, have enjoyed hitherto, in accordance with the constitution. We promise to maintain all these laws and privileges firm and unshakable and in unrestricted operation."

This constitution, which was confirmed by the oaths of five Emperors, was in fact suppressed by the manifesto of Nicolas II, signed at Saint Petersburg on February 3-15, 1899. On the promulgation of this manifesto, a service of national mourning was held in every church throughout Finland ; and in the streets of Helsingfors the women went robed in black. It was of their fatherland that they had been bereaved. This little country of Finland had a strong national life which is being crushed by the breaking up of the institutions which

were the necessary symbols of that life. It was loyal to Russia, but it was not Russian ; that it can never be. It is possible to kill it but not to change it. It is Finnish : it cannot become Slav. It has its own language, its own religion, its own customs. All these things are the expression of its life—nay, life itself. The loss of its liberty means the degeneration of its spirit ; it means that it will wither and die. A noble-hearted and gifted Frenchman recently published in the *Revue de Paris* an essay showing how the soul of Finland is reflected in its national poetry, and how sterling, upright, loyal, heroic and ingenuous it is. Glancing through the cycle of the poems of Runeberg, Madame L. Bernardini enumerates the heroes of that modern epic and concludes as follows : “ The most popular figure, the figure which Finland holds most dearly in her heart, because it faithfully embodies what is best in the nation, is Swen Dufa, the soldier, the kind and simple-hearted giant who, having been stationed at a bridge-head, sustains, single-handed, the attack of a whole battalion of the foe, and stays .

where he is simply because he has been told to do so."

You can get anything out of men of that breed, if you leave them their souls. You rob them of their souls, if you rob them of what forms and nourishes their souls.

In the following pages, M. René Puaux has set forth the noble and touching manifestations in which the people of Finland have given expression to their immense and natural sorrow.

The unlooked-for action of the Emperor of Russia, Grand Duke of Finland, has given rise to a feeling of painful surprise throughout the whole of civilized Europe. An address signed by the leading men of every nation was presented to Nicolas II by an international delegation. Senator Trarieux was a member of the delegation. The Emperor refused to receive it.

Nevertheless, it must not be said that the cause of Finland is lost. We must never despair of a cause that is just. This was M. René Puaux's idea when he wrote *Pour la Finlande*.

The facts set forth so clearly in this little book will move the hearts of those men—and they are still numerous in France—who set a high value on respect for the law and on charity towards our fellow-men.

## LES HEURES LATINES



*The following is a preface to a volume of poems entitled "Les Heures Latines," by the daughter of the gifted woman who was Anatole France's "Egeria" and of whom so many interesting details are recorded in M. Nicolas Ségur's "Conversations with Anatole France."*

# LES HEURES LATINES

BY SIMONE DE CAILLAVET



THE young muse who composed the verses gathered together in this volume is the daughter of that lovable and gifted writer of plays who knew so well how to charm laughter and tears from his audience. For fifteen years he, with the assistance of a loyal collaborator, assumed the heavy task (whereof, however, they seemed to make so light) of entrancing the world. And then, when still a young man, he was cut off by death, at the zenith of his powers.

In private life, Gaston de Caillavet was a sensible and a witty man, very unassuming and very kind. In the society of a father so distinguished and of a beautiful and gifted mother, whose praises I will here forbear to sing,

Simone de Caillavet grew, as the fairy tales say, in grace and in loveliness. When she was quite a child, sheltered as far as possible from the vanities of this world, and living only in the intimacy of a governess almost as small and even more of a child than herself, she listened to the voice of the familiar spirit that was wont to whisper in her ear, a little spirit, less disputatious perhaps than that which came to Socrates, but a spirit all of poetry and of art.

Sometimes, as she issued from these secret communings, she would display, in the presence of her parents, a proud, inscrutable and even somewhat unsociable air. One cannot be possessed of a mysterious genius without betraying signs of it.

When she was five years old, Simone used to write novels. She wrote them in round hand in her exercise books. Wonderful child to begin them. But the real wonder is that she finished them. She carried them through to the bitter end. It was a sign of character. What genius conceives, the will alone performs. *Ne veut pas qui veut.* He wills not who only

wishes. But Simone had a right to wish, for she was born with a will of her own. That was evident from her little firm-set mouth, her determined chin, the way she carried her head, and her general air of resolution.

And she would illustrate her novels with pictures, drawn with chalks of three colours, portraying touching or pathetic scenes. I have before me one of these pictures, happily preserved by the fates. The tale it illustrates is, if one may so put it, a story of Atlantis, the annals of an imaginary people who are sometimes very much like real folk. Their kings, the author tells us, suffered themselves to be ruled by worthless favourites.

In those days Simone wrote verses too, whereof her parents, I believe, have retained some recollection. They were free, but with an unconscious freedom, born of pure innocence. The radiant young woman that she is to-day will forgive an old friend of the family if he indulges in a momentary smile at these relics of her childhood, which, after all, were of happy augury. The child had

need of a familiar spirit to inspire and to hold converse with her dolls. We need not regret having lingered a moment over these childish memories. Like every living thing, whether animal or vegetable, man develops, but does not change his nature. As the flower is, so is the fruit. Simone de Caillavet was born a poet.

For two or three years, now, in various reviews and journals, but generally in newspapers of a more thoughtful cast than those I am accustomed to handle, you might have read, now and again, poems and articles from her pen. I offer her my compliments. I see no drawback therein so far as she is concerned. It is an old prejudice to suppose that it spoils your touch to write for the newspapers. On the contrary, it imparts a suppleness, a freedom and that ease without which your style is cramped and wears no smile upon it. It is a good school, however greatly people have disparaged it. In the old days it was not done ; but then people wrote a great many letters, and long ones to boot. Women, in particular, were

great correspondents, and this took the stiffness out of their fingers. I cannot see why it should be worse to write newspaper articles than to write letters. If the language loses its purity, that is not the fault of the newspapers but of Time, "that loveless old man" who destroys everything and, for preference, whatever is beautiful.]

Mademoiselle de Caillavet's articles are well written. Reason appears therein in comely guise; and by their tone, their elegance and their good breeding they remind one of the articles of the Vicomte de Launay, of whom she has assuredly never heard.

But it is only of her poems that I have to speak here. She writes verse in days of poetic freedom. Time was when the whole republic of rhymsters were subject to strict laws all contained in a single code of universal application. Then came a period when they were free to choose between two schools, the old and the new. It would have been just as false and difficult for a budding poet to enter the old school as for

a full-blown poet to enter the new, and whoso crossed the threshold of neither one nor the other, wandered like a vain shadow in a limbo of obscurity. Nowadays, so far as I can gather, this state of affairs no longer exists. I may be wrong, for I look at these things from a considerable distance. It was long ago that I withdrew from the fray, and now, as I sit above the Scæan Gate with the other old men of my own age, I can no longer quite follow the movements of the chariots, the shouts of the combatants, the flashing of the spears. In a word, I have ceased to be thoroughly up to date in what is going on in the Republic of Letters, wherein I dwelt so long. But it seems that nowadays everything is permissible in poetry, and that there is no sort of verse which it would be unlawful to indite, from the classical form laid down by Malherbe, to that "free verse" which knows no law save the mysterious dictates of inspiration. Nay, more than that! There is coming to birth a kind of poetry which touches the frontiers of cubism and whose significance resides in the length of the

lines and in the ratio of the print to the margin. Of all these diverse manifestations of the lyric spirit, no single one predominates and most of them manage to survive. As a proof of the liberal eclecticism exhibited by the public in this matter, may be mentioned the obvious predilection people are now displaying for two dead poets, Baudelaire and Verlaine, who are wide as the poles asunder. What a contrast is here ! The sober Baudelaire who found in the old-fashioned verse of Boileau a vehicle adequate to express the latest offspring of his imagination, and Verlaine, the eccentric and musical, the inventor of an entirely novel prosody.

(This anarchy (let no one take fright at the word) has its drawbacks, as, for example, that of giving the poets facilities which they are tempted to abuse, if we may take it that " the law of least resistance " applies to Art as well as to all other forms of human activity. But it also has its advantages, and the most valuable of them is this, that each one is free to choose the form best adapted to his temperament.



Formerly, a uniform system of poetry obliterated the charming diversity of temperaments ; then two rival systems bore them to opposite extremes and warped their nature. Nowadays it is open to every one to select the form which suits him best. An easy-going temperament at once glides into fluid and plastic verse, a dreamy genius will favour words and expressions of nebulous import, an industrious and constructive mind will affect an intricate technique.

The soul of Mademoiselle Simone de Cail-  
lavet is mirrored in the form and substance of  
her work. Resolute, tenacious, delighting in  
obstacles, she instinctively chose the difficult  
mode ; she must needs have the clear-cut  
form, rhymes both rich and rare, and verse  
that is mindful of ancient laws. She has felt  
the charm of poems of definite form, such as  
the sonnet, the rondeau, the *terza rima*. She  
likes a stubborn material to work on, and she  
is not afraid to put her strength and her skill  
to the test. She is, in the highest sense of the  
word, a craftswoman. Let her accept the name

with pride. Athena the craftswoman! It was thus the Athenians were wont to name their tutelary divinity.

Mademoiselle de Caillavet imparts a finish to her poems and strives that the workmanship of them should be precious. Let those who think that one can write poetry out of hand, without giving a thought to one's task, reproach her with this if they dare.

Her turn of speech, her habitual style, are literary. And therein she is sincere, natural and true to herself. Could anyone grow wholly forgetful of high literature whose life began in this fair land of France, in this twentieth century of our era, when there echoes in our wake the music of Musset, Racine, La Fontaine, Ronsard, Virgil, Homer, the flutes of Sicily and the harps of Sion, and all the plaintive sweetness that the songs of the North have intermingled with our classic measures? Would it then be fitting to play the shepherdess, to affect an impossible *naïveté* when one is heir to so many harmonious generations, when one

has drunk of the waters of so many fountains, gazed upon so many divers temples and thrilled to the music of so many instruments and so many voices? Ah! how happily inspired was our poetess in thus keeping touch with tradition, fostering her love and her knowledge of an illustrious past. She holds dear the words of consecrated beauty, words that glow and words that sing, words which the Siren taught to the earliest inhabitants of Greece and Sicily. } What if, sometimes, she displays an excessive fondness for rich adornment! Have no fear. Soon she will learn to subdue over-emphasis in colour and in sound. Let the reader doubt the sincerity of the present writer if he gives praise to the talent which is born and grows to maturity amid the trials and tumult of the passing hour. } For he, the farther he advances in life, turns ever more and more towards that classic past, which seems to him to make a richer offering than any other to the spirit of Reason. Aye, and better than all modern forms of beauty, he loves the beauty of antiquity, such at least as he seems too vaguely

to discern it. And yet one cannot dwell wholly in the past.

Pleasant it is to smile upon the face of youth, and wise to put our trust in the years to come ; and with what sweet surprise we gather from young lips beside us, some accents of those muses whose faint and far-off voices we strain our ears across the gulf of time to catch.

In this volume we shall find some poems on the war. And how should so youthful a heart have failed to echo to so formidable and prolonged a blow ? Three years and more, how long a while it seems, in a life that is still so young ! War, it must be confessed, has not always happily inspired our poets, and still less often our poetesses. I for my part have little love for those furies with serpent's tresses who blow impetuously, at the risk of bursting the veins in their forehead, into their brazen trumpets. Wiser than they was the beautiful Greek who flung away the flute that unbecomingly puffed out her cheeks. And despite the wrath and irritation she can at

times display, how happily was our poetess inspired amid the raging tempest ! She shared all the aspirations of her country ; all its longings, all its vaunts she made her own ; but what best pleased her muse was to comfort the sufferer and bewail the dead.

And need we say what else exhales from these songs of a woman's heart ? What indeed but Love, Love that is common to everything that breathes, and in every being takes on a fresh character. All experience it, but few can express it. Happy are they who have the power. The words that fall from their lips are harvested by the world. To begin with, love, in the book before me—a child's love—does not so much reveal itself as suffer itself to be divined. You may trace it in adorable winning ways and delicious child-talk. Then, on a sudden, it bursts forth, chaste, wide-eyed and tender, able to suffer, and as fearful of joy as of sorrow.

Thrice happy muse ! 'Tis life's fresh splendour, the birth of a nymph divine, in love with sounds and colours, and all mysterious

things, a nymph who looks with delicious terror on "the unknown face of Love."

Love and Death cannot be thought of nor felt, apart from one another. The Greeks, on their funeral urns, associate the twin gods Erôs—he who gives life to men and he who takes it away. In this book, too, we shall find Erôs and Anterôs. And here on "The Hour of Death" we shall read a poem profound in thought and feeling. It would ill become me in this place to elaborate the idea which inspires it and to tear the veil from a thought which is still half-hidden from the sight. Nevertheless one must perforce admire the hand which casts upon the doubts, the misgivings and the bold questioning of the mind, flowers which adorn and shed their perfume upon them, but do not hide them from the view.

The author of this book is in love with glory. She, noble child that she is, would fain live on in the memory of man. She has discovered the same aspirations in a young girl who preceded her by many years in this

life and died young, while yet her yearnings for Art and Beauty were unrequited ; and touching are the verses in which she salutes the shade of that elder sister, Marie Bashkirtseff. Keep, Simone, keep inviolate your generous dreams, and may you live to bring them to pass.

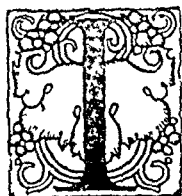
MENTIS



*The following relates to a philosophical poem entitled "Mentis," by M. Léon Hély, a work that may have appealed to Anatole France by reason of some likeness between its hero, "a philosopher shut up among his books in his garret in the Avenue de l'Observatoire, calling back to life the vanished generations of humanity," and his own creation, Monsieur Sylvestre Bonnard.*

## MENTIS

By LÉON HÉLY



THINK, with the poet of *Mentis*, that the system of a philosopher is the most pathetic of dramas, and that the universal evanescence of things is a spectacle of even deeper sadness than the flower-decked corse of Ophelia lying drowned in the brook at Elsinore. And therefore it is that I have followed the three cantos of this poem like the three acts of a sublime and terrible tragedy.

The work of M. Léon Hély will, I think, be pleasing to sincere and contemplative minds, and will inspire them with a fellow feeling for that mind, so true, so grave and so sedate, which is portrayed, or rather, mirrored, in his *Mentis*. As for me, my heart went out at once to this brother in thought who is depicted for

us shut up amid his books, in his garret in the Avenue de l'Observatoire, calling back to life all the vanished generations of humanity, passing through his mind all the thoughts that had agitated them throughout the ages, creating anew all the gods that they had created. Divinity it is that this chemist of psychology would fain bring forth and subject to treatment. And to his task he brings the historical and positive method, wherein he proves himself a modern, a man of our own times. In all ages there have existed unquiet minds who rummaged among the débris of beliefs so that they might recover from each its modicum of truth. But in the nineteenth century a man may, single-handed like Mentis, consider and peruse, as though on an immense frieze, the images of the divine among the Egyptians, the Cimmerians, the Assyrians, in Persia, in India, in Greece, and in Rome, Rome wherein he at length discovers the origin of that faith which preserves, even to-day, a remnant of vitality among the nations. He hails the god of the newest era :

O grand consolateur, repose  
Dans la lumière.

But there was never a dogma that satisfied his intelligence. It is now that there appears to him a heavenly visage which, nevertheless, is not Christian. I seem to be reminded of some composition, at once familiar and supernatural, of Fantin Latour's, when the poet brings before me Mentis leaning his head on his hand at his study window, whence the eye beholds a wide prospect of green trees, domes and steeples and housetops, and receiving, like Musset in *Les Nuits*, the visit of a winged Muse.

That Muse is Luxa, and she is Truth. But she too brings, not peace, but a sword.

And these lyrical dialogues that are carried on between the man and Truth, present yet shrouded with a veil, are sustained by the poet with a lyrical austerity and a restrained passion which compel our admiration.

In his anguish, in his struggle against despair, which marks the third and final episode of the poem, Mentis displays a

resemblance to many among ourselves. And his state of mind is sufficiently interesting to prompt us to seek out the causes which produced it. We may perhaps succeed in discovering them without abandoning the intellectual and scientific domain in which the poet maintains us.

In the seventeenth century, a straightforward man, if he was devoid of curiosity, still pictured to himself the world as a fine piece of clockwork in a form borrowed from the Bible and from Ptolemy. The ideas of Copernicus and Galileo made exceedingly slow progress in the minds of men. I have here before me a little book entitled *The Chief Marvels of Nature*, published at Rouen in 1723, and this is what I find on page eight thereof. "Some philosophers, and Copernicus among others, sought to maintain that the earth was not situated at the centre of the universe ; but their view is contested by several learned astronomers who hold that the earth is in truth situated in the very midst of creation and is everywhere surrounded by heavens at an equal

distance from it, which could not be the case if the earth were not at the centre of the universe." That is what was being taught thirty-seven years after Fontenelle had published his *Entretiens*.

Being unable to imagine the unimaginable distance which separates us from the nearest stars, the magicians and astrologers who still clung to the ancient ideas which had the authority of Aristotle, argued, not without a show of reason, that if the earth revolved round the sun, the spectacle of the heavens would change in the course of its vast circuit. They did not dream that so immense an orbit was but a point in the infinity of worlds, and that when we have traversed the full diameter of the circle described by us, we do not appear, in the eyes of our distant neighbours, to have moved at all. It needed instruments of extraordinary delicacy to enable us to note the parallax of the nearest stars.

And now it is all over with the twelve heavens and the planets beneath which men were born lucky or unlucky, jovial or saturnine.

The solid vault of the firmament is shattered. Our gaze and our thoughts are swallowed up in the infinite immensities of the heavens. Beyond the planets we discover no more the Empyrean of the elect and the angels, but hundreds of millions of suns, revolving amid their train of obscure satellites invisible to our eyes.

Amid this infinity of worlds, our own particular sun is but a bubble of gas and the earth but a drop of mud. Our imagination is irritated and amazed when we are told that the ray of light which comes to us from the Polar star has been on its way for half a century, and that this star, nevertheless, is one of our near neighbours. And some there are whose light we still behold in the field of the telescope, but which have perhaps been extinguished for more than three thousand years.

Worlds die, since worlds are born. Always some are dying, and others coming to birth. And creation, infinite and forever imperfect, pursues its way amid metamorphoses that never cease. There is no more repose in the heavenly

spaces than there is upon our earth. The law of labour and the law of effort reign over all the infinite numbers of worlds. The heavens, which were believed incorruptible, know nothing that is eternal save the eternal transience of all things ; dying and coming to birth, perpetual expansions and condensations of the mysterious thing called matter, so that some say that the universe is the respiration of God.

M. Léon Hély will forgive me for jotting down these reflections on the margin of his *Mentis*. He has conceived his philosophic poem with a rectitude and elevation of soul we must perforce admire. It is for every one of his readers, not for me alone, to pronounce on the success of his endeavours. I will bestow upon him none of those eulogies which, in this place, would offend his modesty and his merit. I will merely say that it is enough for his honour that the ambition of a Lucretius should have stirred his soul.



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STENDHAL

*The inclusion of this essay on Stendhal is the more appropriate in view of the recent revival of interest in the work and personality of the author of "La Chartreuse de Parme," a revival for which the able translations of Mr. C. K. Scott-Moncrieff are largely responsible.*

*The essay in question originally appeared in the "Revue de Paris," and the English translation, by the editor of the present volume, was published in "To-day," December 1921, and was subsequently reprinted privately for Mr. Holbrook Jackson, by whose courteous permission it is here reproduced.*

## STENDHAL



ABOUT the time when Stendhal's monument in the Jardin du Luxembourg was being unveiled, a very dear friend of mine, and a great admirer of Stendhal, asked me whether I loved that delightful man with the wholeheartedness he deserved.

"Why," I replied, "he is, of all men that ever breathed, the most sympathetic and communicative, and I have lost a great deal by not cultivating him as I might have done. He reveals himself to us with that utter artlessness which is the most seductive thing in the world. He is always true, even when he lies, and he does lie occasionally as, of course, he is bound to do. The lie is one of life's constant necessities. Without it there would exist nor art, nor beauty, nor love in the world. And so,

I repeat, when he lies, he is still true, true to himself, and to nature ; always intimate, always confiding, the most sterling fellow imaginable. You see I love him. I admire him, too, though admiration and affection seldom go together. Affection is homely, familiar ; it loves the cheerful face, the merry laugh. It goes with open countenances and open hearts, and shuns the sombre, introspective brood. We admire Pascal ; we do not love him. Stendhal we love, and we delight in exploring that most picturesque of souls."

" Well, but why have you never said so ? " flashed out my friend. " How is it you have never written anything on Stendhal ? "

My reply was that it really did not signify whether I had or hadn't spoken of Stendhal and that, anyhow, I was not the man for the undertaking because, as I had just explained, I had not cultivated him deeply enough ; and I added that the task of presenting him to the public was best left to those many excellent writers who had made him their special study. In short, I advanced some sound arguments.

Yet, on this occasion, as on most others, they failed of their effect. Sound arguments never convinced any man. So, partly because I was weak and partly because he was my friend, I gave in to him. And now I must keep my word.

Begin, then, Sisters of the Sacred Well !

In the disorder of my divine frenzy, I will first sing my hero's calves.

I remember that Arsène Houssaye once observed to us, in tones of considerable admiration, that Stendhal had a fine leg. Now it is a fact that in the diverting portrait which Henri Mounier chose—I don't know why—as the frontispiece of his *Soirées de Neuilly*, our author, in swallow-tail coat and knee breeches, is seen displaying a superb pair of calves. He prided himself on this gift of nature and made the most of it in his choice of riding breeches. Great is his grief when he upsets a cup of coffee over a brand-new pair. Nay, Sirs, your laughter is out of place ! When Louis XIV was King, a fine leg was thought as much of in a man as in a woman, and Saint-Simon is

careful to record that the Chevalier de Rohan has the finest leg in the kingdom. Rigault, in his portrait of the King, hitches up the royal mantle for us, to display the royal thigh. In the days of Murat, Junot and Lassalle, fine calves were an important asset. What call, then, had Beyle to despise these gifts of nature? Since those days, we have grown a little puritanical in our ideas, but, peradventure, sports and athletics will revive our interest in the human form, and who knows what benefits may accrue to the strapping specimens of our race from the wars which the future, alas ! has in store for us? We need not chide Beyle because he knew he was well set up and rejoiced in the knowledge. For the rest, his portraits display a round, fat, rather grumpy face, with a shade of the comic about it, lit up by a pair of little, twinkling eyes. It was not his appearance which hampered him in his dealings with womenkind, to whom he was tremendously attracted. He had a much greater handicap ; he was shy. That is a terrible drawback. If you would have women

love you, much and often, be squint-eyed, hump-backed, club-footed if you will, 'tis no odds. But, oh, I charge you, be not shy ! Shyness is the sworn enemy of Love. 'Tis an almost irremediable defect.

We are indebted to the patient sagacity of M. Paul Arbelet, who has brought a wealth of valuable material to his biography of our author, for our detailed knowledge of the love which, as a young man of twenty, Beyle entertained for Mademoiselle Victorine Mounier. When he was that age, he cried aloud, like Cherubin, to the trees, the skies and the breeze, " I love you ! " The peculiarity of this particular passion was that, though the lover, on one occasion, heard his adored one play the piano at a concert, he never once set eyes on her. He deemed her dainty, almost thin. One day, a friend of his informed him that she was heavy and plain. The revelation amazed him. 'Twas thus that the Knight of La Mancha, brimful of love for his lady Dulcinea, bade his squire tell him how she impressed him. " She has eyes of pearl,"



quoth Sancho. Whereat Don Quixote was sore amazed and inquired whether it were not her teeth that were of pearl, seeing that, when one came to think of it, eyes of pearl were better suited to a fish than to a woman. The youthful Beyle used cunning devices to touch the heart of Victorine Mounier. After pining for five whole years, withered by the flames and tears of passion, he beheld her for the first time, or thought he did, and asked her some quite ordinary question, to which it appeared to him she replied by a nod. He deems that his fashionable attire and elegant Parisian manners must have greatly impressed her, but he doesn't know whether she recognized him. Thus ended the great love of Beyle for Victorine Mounier.

We are also indebted to M. Arbelet, among innumerable other things, for our acquaintance with the diary of Stendhal's love adventures at Milan, which, after several fruitless years, were at length rewarded by the Countess Pietragrua, whom Time had compensated in stateliness for what he had filched from her in beauty. So

love was his at last, though M. Arbelet suspects that he did not obtain it without valuable consideration. Nevertheless, Beyle's triumph sat lightly upon him. He possessed insight, but not more than a man may naturally boast of, and it is because he always keeps within the bounds of nature that he never fails to please us. So far as we can make out he was a great lover. Wife or maid, town-bred or country-bred, nought in the shape of a woman was too hot or too cold for him. And he had a particular predilection for hotel serving-maids. 'Twas a big programme for a lover who was liable, at any moment, to relapse into his youthful shyness. Fortunately, continued effort and native resolution combined to embolden his behaviour. So highly did he esteem the advantages resulting from this intrepid line of conduct, that he elevated it into a system. He gave it as his belief that a woman may always be taken by storm and that to hold back in such encounters ought to make any man feel ashamed of himself. He gave instructions to the young on these grave matters

and would allow his flock five minutes in which to say to a woman, "I love you!" Such was his doctrine, but in his own private and particular instance it was not put into practice. His friend Prosper Mérimée assigns to his later years two "grandes passions," yet he never beheld him more deeply engaged than one who is "in love or thinks he is." I don't know why, but I cannot help thinking of a remark which M. Renan let fall to us beneath the rose one evening. Having passed an unfavourable verdict on the morals of Musulmans and Christians, that wise and gifted man turned to us and said: "Europeans display a deplorable lack of decision in everything connected with the union of the sexes."

Henri Beyle came of a highly respectable Grenoble family. Nature had endowed him with courage, self-reliance and an uncompromising impatience of authority. He refused to receive the imprint of any system of religion. From his childhood he had loved freedom. He never joined the flock of innocent lambs or swelled the choir of good

angels. Made of such stuff as this, he began to dabble in soldiering and went off to Italy as *aide-de-camp* to General Michaud. It was the time when Paul-Louis was playing the mounted artilleryman. The military profession in those days was not incompatible with a large measure of freedom. Beyle was able to live at his ease and to roam where he listed. He was not a better soldier than Paul-Louis, but he was braver and, in a tight corner, could bear himself with coolness and intrepidity.

It was at Milan, during the wars, that that ingenious artist we call Chance contrived a subject for a vignette in the very manner of Charlet of the *Memorial*, and gave us the spectacle of an apple-cheeked, ruddy-faced, dashing young officer, with a well-turned leg, hobnobbing in a box at the Scala with an old, lanky, vinegar-faced General of Artillery. This strange couple were Henri Beyle and Choderlos de Laclos. From his earliest years Beyle had been accustomed to delve in the *Liaisons Dangereuses*, which he regarded as the indispensable *vade mecum* of anyone who would

have his way with the women. Now, Laclos had written this book in his young days at Grenoble, and his youthful fellow countrymen could talk to him of Madame de Merteuil—her real name was Madame de Montmort—who, he remembered, used to walk with a limp and give him sugared almonds. And Laclos, brooding over the overthrow of his extravagant ambitions, grew soft and sentimental as these memories were recalled to him. Many years ago he had unburdened himself on the same theme to the Comte de Tilly. “It was at Grenoble,” he then declared, “that I beheld the original whereof my lady (Madame de Merteuil) is but a faint copy. ’Twas a certain Marquis de L.T.D.P.M. The whole town was full of stories of her doings, which were worthy of the most insatiable and licentious of Roman Empresses.” Now you must on no account imagine that Beyle was a bookish creature. That would be quite out of the picture. He had no inkling of his destiny and devoted himself exclusively to the art of life—which, when all is said and done, is the most difficult

and the most useful art of all—uncertain at that time whether he was marked out for trade or a Government office. And by way of beginning his life's work, which was life itself to him, he went a-travelling in Italy. And he ordered his peregrinations after the worthy example of President de Brosses, first with the object of acquainting himself with the men and, still more, with the women of the country; and, next, with its natural and artistic amenities, but with this difference: that the President kept his investigations within bounds, as became a magistrate who knew he would have to return at the appointed hour to his civic duties at Dijon,

Heureux qui comme Ulysse a fait un beau voyage !\*

while Beyle tarried long, lost himself in this paradise of the senses, and became a regular cosmopolitan :

Je suis concitoyen de tout homme qui pense.†

Enjoyment was his sole aim in his wanderings .

\* Happy the man who like Ulysses has made a good voyage !

† I am the fellow-citizen of every man that thinks.

through this loveliest of countries. Italy is the Land of Love. Of his way of playing the lover we have already given a hint or two. Lacking the mellow culture of the President de Brosses, and less richly endowed with the artistic faculty, what first engaged his fancy was Italian music. Though no musician, his ear for melody was keen and delicate. Nevertheless, his observations regarding Rossini seem very out of date to-day and almost excite a smile. It is a strange thing that music, which is an art common to men and birds and which, among men as among birds, one would expect to exhibit the universal and constant charm of the beautiful things of nature, is, on the contrary, more exposed than any other form of art to the revolutions of taste and the vicissitudes of sentiment. Music is solely subservient to the law of numbers and should therefore be as fixed and stable as arithmetic, yet, behold, it is the sport of every whim of fashion ! I wish some one learned in the philosophy of music would expound to me the reason of this anomaly. Well, Stendhal spoke fittingly and

well concerning music. As a judge of painting, he was not so well equipped ; his sight was poor ; he had no sense of colour or design. By sheer application he acquired the faculty to enjoy pictures ; and what with using his brain, taking infinite trouble and always maintaining a lofty desire for the Beautiful, he became, at length, a connoisseur. He has spoken well of Correggio and we must be grateful to him. He thought highly of Raphael, whom nowadays public opinion will not suffer us to admire because he is not difficult enough.

One of Stendhal's most grievous errors was to hold that the sole aim of the painter's and sculptor's art is to express the emotions and portray the passions. Diderot went similarly off the lines. When he looked at a picture he expected it to appeal to his emotions. He required of Greuze that he should move him to tears and, if Greuze left him calm, he overwhelmed him with abuse. In the same way Beyle's sole requirement of art is that it should appeal to the emotions ; that, and nought



besides. Neither richness of colour, nor correct draughtsmanship, nor the style of the work, nor the character of the faces, possessed any interest for him. Their execution moved him not. A picture must move him to tears or fury, must inspire him with love or veneration or send him off into an ecstasy. If it doesn't, it's only fit for the lumber room. It was about this period that Lord Byron was weeping before Guercino's *Agar* at Milan. The truth is that these excellent gentry were not very far advanced in matters of art. They were like M. Poirier who was overcome with emotion at the sight of a picture in which a child is depicted as being saved from drowning by a Newfoundland dog. His son-in-law, the Marquis de Presle, tells him that a picture of some one chopping onions should also make you weep. Beyle's conception of art was a trifle commonplace. A work of art should affect us by bringing beauty before our eyes. In the circumstances it was impossible for our traveller to have felt the charm of antiquity. He deemed it cold. Cold and expressionless.

We would say, if we must find an excuse for him, that the people of his day were not very deeply versed in ancient art ; for Winckelmann there was no finer thing than the Apollo Belvedere, and he knew nothing of the Greek marbles. Chateaubriand is in no better case. In his *Itinerary* he ascribes the frontons of the Parthenon to the period of the Emperor Hadrian. Nowadays these masterpieces are accessible to any fool who likes to insult them with his admiration.

Beyle had his favourite sculptor. He was a modern, a contemporary, Canova, then in the full blaze of his European reputation. Beyle made profession of the admiration and respect he entertained for him. Canova was distinguished for the grace and elevation of his style. It would nevertheless be interesting to know what Beyle, that great lover of Nature, really thought in his inmost heart of such a zealous purifier of the flesh, of a sculptor who surpassed Thorwaldsen himself in coldness and severity, imparted to the naked form more chastity than is generally conferred upon it by

veils and draperies, and gave his goddesses the appearance of torchbearers.

As for architecture, Beyle, in spite of his shortsightedness, took great delight in it and dealt very sensibly with the subject. There is a wealth of good sense and good feeling in his descriptions of Saint Peter's at Rome and of Bernini's colonnade. If we leave Milan out of the count—and Milan, despite its beauty, has few admirers—we may say that Italy possesses no outstanding examples of Gothic architecture. Our connoisseur did not complain of that—far from it. He had a horror of Christian art. He could not endure anything that was sad, and, as to cathedrals, he was of the same mind as Fénelon who, in his *Dialogue on Eloquence*, compared a bad sermon to a Gothic church. It was Mérimée who taught him the difference between a Roman and a pointed arch. The archæologist who made a study of the Abbey of Chaise-Dieu and Saint Savin, young Mérimée, cool and ironical, pointing out the details of a Roman apse adorned with severed heads to the stout, rubicund gentleman with the

bulging calves—there we have another pretty subject for a vignette. This one should have a romantic turn about it, something in the cruel and satiric manner of Eugène Delacroix in his illustrations to Goethe's *Faust*. Our lithograph would have this legend inscribed beneath it in the Gothic lettering so popular in 1830 :

“*Stend.* : No, I don't like sad art.

“*Mér.* : Nothing that diverts us is sad. Look at all this swarming spawn of Satan.”

Beyle, who was getting old, stuck to Percier and Fontaine. He did not seek distraction from the tedium of life in the study of Christian art.

Art, Love, Friendship, Reading, such were our worthy friend's chief amusements. Though he suffered no outstanding misfortunes in his life, he did not escape those maladies which commonly afflict our human state and of which the most terrible is *Thought*. He had his share of suffering, physical and moral. He bore it all with that cheerful stoicism which was the bed-rock of his character.

The thing which Stendhal endured with

least patience in this world was the contact of fools. He feared them more than he feared knaves. And therein he was right. "Fools," said Lammenais, "are more redoubtable than knaves. Knaves take a little rest sometimes, fools never do." Yes, of a truth, the fool is more fearsome than the knave. He it is who brings you bad news ; he is the upright judge who condemns the innocent ; he is the physician of repute who kills the patient ; 'tis he who causes wars and plagues and does sacrifice to cruel gods ; who obliterates Io's lovely countenance on a picture of Correggio's ; who, good kind husband, kills by slow fires his unhappy wife. He is the natural enemy of knowledge, beauty and liberty. If Stendhal, by the employment of skill and energy, sometimes managed to keep clear of fools, there was, alas, one visitant whom he did not evade and who was the bane of his life. 'Twas a silent and invisible guest, and his name was Ennui ; Ennui, unbearable Ennui, our direst foe. Beside him, Sadness with her veils and flowing draperies, and the interplay of her sombre

shadows, almost seems to smile at us. But Ennui is naked, he has no countenance, no expression ; he is formless and mute ; and, in our momentary lives, he seems to haunt us for whole ages. Whence comes it that this companion who besets the majority of men and ever prefers the more cultured among them, how is it that he seems so universally terrible ? Is it not because he silently reveals to us the mediocrity of our human lot and makes us behold ourselves as we really are ? Stendhal knew him — this visitant — as well or more than most, but assuredly he did not talk of him as I have been talking here, for fear lest he should abandon himself too deeply to melancholy and develop into a second Sénancour. I owe this tribute to his firmness of character.

Beyle, in his ideas, is fundamentally an eighteenth-century man. A disciple of Helvetius and Condillac, he dismissed God from his philosophic system with as little compunction as Laplace banished Him from his mechanical one. A certain lady used to say of André Chénier that he revelled in his

atheism. If Beyle did not precisely revel in his atheism, he was at least content with it ; but his satisfaction was unaccompanied by the least ostentation or the smallest desire to bring mankind to embrace that particular form of belief. To proselytize was the last thing he aimed at and, even if he had thought he had his hands full of truths, he would never have consented to open them. Human opinions inspired him with a decorous disdain.

As for rival modes of Government, he was ever an upholder of the Revolution. In his early youth he was a Jacobin ; venerating Brutus and looking on Napoleon with the eyes of Arena. Time softened the severity of these opinions. We possess some fragments of a history of his which testify to a lively admiration for the victor of Marengo. He detested the Bourbons with an unfaltering constancy truly remarkable in an age when men out-rivalled Dame Fortune in fickleness, so that the pamphleteers of the day had as much material for a *Weathercock's Dictionary* as would have filled the biggest *Almanach Royal* to over-

flowing. During the Restoration he was on terms of the closest friendship with Béranger and Manuel. He hated priests like poison and used to sketch extinguishers in his notebooks as an emblematic indication of what he thought of the mentality of the country's rulers. He made his peace with Louis Philippe, who gave him a decoration. This pleased him mightily. To doubt it would argue a scanty knowledge of men, and suggest the belief that great minds are not subject to little weaknesses. That would be a delusion.

There is one characteristic of Beyle's so conspicuous that it must not be omitted in any sketch however cursory ; and that was his inveterate fondness for playing the Mystery Man. As he was for ever involved in some love affair or another, one can understand his anxiety to be cautious. But when we come to examine his papers, we find that he was like many other lovers who want at one and the same time to declare all and conceal all. Was it spies he dreaded, or the police, or hired men ?



No doubt the Governments under which he lived justified such anxiety. In 1820, the Austrian police, deeming he was mixed up with the Carbonari, expelled him from Milan. Of course, that was enough to make him careful. Yes, of course ; but Stendhal's caution had something quite peculiar about it, something so puerile that it is quite obvious he was merely playing a game for his own amusement. Surprising, some will say, that a man with so much brains should choose such a mode of distraction. It is only the fool who never allows himself to play the fool. This great novelist, notwithstanding the untroubled sequence of his days, used to love to delude himself with the notion that, like his own Fabrice, he was beset by the most terrible dangers. Hence these aliases, these initials, these pseudonyms, these dark sayings, these Italian and English phrases, these names inked over or scratched out ; all his childish fee-fo-fum devices which render the deciphering of his manuscripts so difficult and which are at once the despair and delight of his editors.

For an editor, too, likes to have his adventures. We all like adventures.

There are some men of genius who, like Leibnitz, attract us more by their personality than by their works. There are others whose only interest lies in their writings ; Le Sage, for example. I fancy that when we read Beyle, it is Beyle we are seeking, and that the man himself is more to us than the finest stories he ever wove. He was nevertheless an incomparable essayist and a very great novelist. His passion for the romantic, his contempt for verisimilitude, which he often sacrificed for some vague, indefinite "higher thing," are very remarkable. Beyle's method, so happily exemplified in *le Rouge et le Noir* and in *la Chartreuse*, in no sense foreshadows the style of romance which was to hold the field for the remainder of the nineteenth century. Beyle was much more nearly allied to Richardson, Jean-Jacques, Laclos, Benjamin Constant and Goethe, at all events in his desire to portray sentiment and nothing but sentiment. There is nothing in Beyle which suggests Balzac, his

junior by sixteen years, but more precocious, more advanced than he, Balzac the prince of word-painters, Balzac who gives us such vivid, richly coloured pictures of men and things ; nothing, either, that reminds us of Walter Scott, who was the elder of both, of Walter Scott, with his wealth of description, whom we must certainly not forget since in those days he held dominion over every heart and every mind throughout the world.

It is well known that, though Stendhal worked out his plots with elaborate attention to detail, he never attempted to revise or correct. Are we to infer from that that he did not write well ? Certainly we are not. Fénelon rarely corrected his work, and when he did, he spoilt it. Fénelon was regarded by Stendhal as the most engaging writer of the seventeenth century, and there are still many who share his opinion. Beyle, like Fénelon, held that, in style, the great thing was to be natural. We could only infer from that that he was not an artist, or at any rate, not more of an artist than Fénelon. In point of fact, everything goes

to show that he was considerably less so. But there are several ways of writing, and a man may achieve conspicuous success without exercising any conscious artistry, and become a writer of high repute, after the fashion of Henri IV in his *Letters* and Saint-Simon in his *Memoirs*, without making so much as a single correction.

“ Well,” you ask once more, “ did Beyle write well ? ” If I had to answer this question clearly and definitely, I should make answer that, in Beyle’s day, no one wrote well ; that the French language had gone to perdition and that every writer at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Chateaubriand as well as Marchangy, every writer, I repeat, wrote ill, with the solitary exception of Paul-Louis Courier, and his was a case apart. Paul-Louis Courier having noted that the French language had perished, fashioned for his own special use a medium composed of fragments culled from Amyot and La Fontaine. That is the exact opposite of what Stendhal did, and no two contemporaries could ever be less like one another.

“ Yes, yes,” I hear you say, “ but come now, Beyle, did he write well, or did he not ? ”

Well, then, I say unto you, if you would find the French language, look for it in the chapters of Pantagruel, or in the essays of Montaigne, or in a page of old Amyot whose grace and charm Racine ever despaired of capturing, and you will forthwith perceive that, in the ages which followed, we shall seek in vain for a flower of such loveliness, for such inimitable elegance. Pass quickly on and search the great centuries that follow. If, then, you take as an example of good style the *Conversation du maréchal d'Hocquincourt avec le père Cannaye*, the *Roman comique*, Racine's *Letters sur les Imaginaires*, the *Caractères* of La Bruyère, the *Souvenirs* of Madame de Caylus, then you will say that Beyle is not a good writer. But if you compare him, as is equitable and just, with one of his contemporaries and the best among them, with the most talented and most gifted, you will say that he writes well, nay, very well indeed, and that he surpasses Chateaubriand

in the clarity of his subject-matter and in the chastity of his diction.

The evil fortunes of the language, which set in when Mirabeau was a young man, grew more acute under the Revolution despite those giants of oratory : Vergniaud, Saint-Just, Robespierre, in comparison with whom our public speakers of to-day seem but noisy children ; despite, too, Camille Desmoulins who penned the last well-written pamphlet which France was destined to peruse. The malady increased in the days of the Empire and the Restoration, and exhibited itself in its full horror in the works of Thiers and Guizot.

In those deplorable days, such writers as still retained a feeling for exactitude and a sense of style made frantic endeavours to avoid the pest. Each one of them, following the example of Paul-Louis Courier, invented a mode of speech to suit himself, and everywhere singularity was the one thing sought for. Originality which, in the seventeenth century, was only held in esteem in the order of ideas, now began to be affected in words and phrases,

in vocabulary and syntax. This was an evil, when one bears in mind that, speech being destined for the general ear, any quaintness or eccentricity of style is a thing to be deplored. Nevertheless, the language had to be built up anew and there were skilful craftsmen at hand to accomplish the task ; some, indeed, were giants. Unhappily the limpidity of the subject-matter was occasionally obscured by too much straining after originality. An excess of care and finesse in the workmanship destroyed the natural simplicity of the work itself.

There is always a suggestion of sadness about an age of decadence ; about the lot of a Boëthius or a Paulus Orosius. Let us, however, beware of indulging in premature lamentations over the decay of the French language and literature. Tacitus did not write in the Augustan age, yet we read him with a deeper emotion and greater pleasure than we bring to the perusal of Livy. Therein lies a comforting reflection for our historians to solace their hearts withal. And here is another, no less consoling, which I offer our novelists and

story writers. Let them think of Petronius, of Petronius the Elegant, who flourished in Nero's reign, and whose birth, if I do not err, M. Salomon Reinach ascribes to a date far later still.

As touching the poets, who have a language of their own, and whose decline was not steady and continuous like that of the prose writers, I will say nought. Beyle has turned my thoughts away from them. He knew nothing about poetry. He was a foe to Apollo, a veritable Marsyas.



## JEUNES MADAMES

*The following is a preface, and a singularly witty and sagacious one, to a society novel of the day entitled "Jeunes Madames," by a popular authoress who writes under the pseudonym of Brada.*

## JEUNES MADAMES

BY BRADA



I KNEW that there ought not to be any preface to this book, that it would spoil it, and I said so. But people would not believe me, and so here I am, despite myself, launched on a gratuitous and graceless undertaking in which I am sure to please nobody. Unless one is a very great doctor, one of those spiritual directors whom the crowd are always eager to consult, it ill becomes one to write a preface—"a great occasion for showing off," my master, Condillac, calls it. No one likes to be forestalled in this way, or to have things dinned into him with the importunity of a guide who pounces on you at the very entrance. Guides

spoilt Italy for me ; they even spoilt the subterranean church at Assisi and the tomb of Galla Placidia at Ravenna, places where there reigns a holy and delicious horror. I tried to escape the cicerones by force, and put up a brave fight. But they beat me. I endeavoured to flee. They overtook me and brought me back a prisoner. I should be their victim still, if I had not had recourse to stratagem. It was stratagem that saved me then, and saves me still in fresh encounters.

Every time I find myself at the church of one of those adorable little Tuscan or Umbrian towns and some ragged Italian comes up to me, terrible in his smiling suavity, and says in inspired and persuasive tones, " Signore, I am a guide," I answer, " And so am I ! " Ulysses in all his wanderings never bethought him of a more ingenious ruse. The Italian, who suddenly discovers in my person a sinister rival, darts at me a look of mingled hate and terror and at once makes off.

" I too am a guide ! " Those words which in my mouth were but the quip of a cunning

mind, have to-day become the expression of a baleful reality. And, unfortunately for me, it is less easy to introduce Brada's *Jeunes Madames* to the curious than to show a party of foreigners over the Campo Santo at Pisa, on hallowed ground covered all over with roses. But what a business to keep revolving around baskets full of orchids! I am shy, and society has always made me feel afraid. It gives me the same sort of scared feeling that the Court produced in the Sages of the seventeenth century. And it is into society that I have got to take you, I who shun it. I don't think well of it, but I will speak no ill of it. I don't think it's everything, but I won't say it's nothing. 'Tis the silvery foam on the shores of the human ocean. It is something airy and brilliant. And Brada, who belongs to it, talks about it very well. I remember how amazed I was once when reading the *Vie Parisienne*, at all the pretty things Brada knew about the diplomatic world. And I see that she knows still prettier things about society women.

If I was anything of an artist I might essay

in a sketch, inserted by way of frontispiece, to give a foretaste of the elegant things that strew the pages that follow. And, since this string of dialogues is a sort of comedy, I would, were I a musician, endeavour to write an overture in clear, ringing tones, not without a wealth of trills, to imitate the dainty prattle of your fine ladies, Brada. But to describe, explain in words, in ordinary everyday language, creatures so iridescent, so bewildering in their changeful hues, as Paule d'Haspre, Roseline or Luce, how is it to be done? How, I pray you tell me? As I say, they scare me, your *Jeunes Madames*. The charming frivolity of women is very alarming to the philosopher. And then your ladies are very complex. It requires all your skill to take to pieces and put together again the innumerable little wheels of these pretty little purposeless bits of machinery. If it was a question of love, I would try to find something to say, like everybody else. It's a fine subject. Of course you have never heard the story of that young philosopher who was holding forth on love in a Quartier Latin

cabaret, after dinner, to a dozen or so professors and men of letters. He was developing the various parts of his thesis with the most orderly skill, when one of his interlocutors declared that he had never had any experience in the matter. Immediately the young philosopher stood up, and having made sure that he had a couple of half-crowns in his pocket, put on his hat and went out. Ten minutes later he calmly re-entered. Resuming his place at the table he said :

“Gentlemen, having now acquired the necessary experience, I will proceed with the exposition of my theory.”

Doubtless his experience of love had been gained a little summarily. Still, the elements were his. It is much more difficult to get to know a Roseline or a Paule. Moreover, meditations and experiences concerning love would be quite unavailing. The *Jeunes Madames* are complete strangers to love, and if they give one the notion of it, it is purely the effect of their external form which suggests to the plain man a disastrous association of

ideas. We must first of all realize quite plainly that these *Jeunes Madames* are anything but young women in love. Unless we do so, we are bound to go wrong. What amazes me is the skill with which Brada endows these vain and charming monsters with life. My author's manner is at once indulgent and ironic ; she is precious without being pretentious. And lastly, I regard her as greatly daring, since she is bold enough to dispense with sin. Yes, this undying attraction of woman, Eve's adornment, the Magdalen's glory, this antique yet never-fading garland, Sin, Brada disdains to bedeck her creatures withal. Men, generally speaking, have not such courage. The gentle Berquin had it, in his day, and we still smile at the mention of his name. True Berquin was an ingenuous creature. Brada is not. If her little ladies abstain from sin, it is in no wise on account of the perfidy it involves or the effects which (so they say) it produces in this world and the next. No, they despise it as a coarse mode of behaviour, a pleasure outworn and altogether too simple. They are



conscious of no feelings of any sort. Where there is nought, the Devil has nothing to claim. They cannot fall into the common abyss, because that is in nature, and they are outside it.

Such is the progress of manners. There is not a jot left of our old humanity, of our pristine virtues, our ancient morality, not so much as the breach thereof.

VICTOR HUGO

## VICTOR HUGO



THE man whom all France, with a mother's pride and a daughter's sorrow (I take these words from a King's epitaph), is following to his glorious grave—I mean Victor Hugo—was the voice of his century.

Rightly did he say of himself that God had placed him at the centre of things, like a sonorous echo. And, truly, he was endowed with the power to express everything that we had in our hearts.

He was one with us in our hours of strength, in our weaknesses, and even in our moments of despair. He gave utterance to our sublimest dreams, to our sacred aspirations as well as to our blind animosities and our perilous passions.

It is the interpreter of three generations who descends into the grave to-day mourned

not only by a few elect spirits, but by a whole nation, by the lowly no less than by the great.

We cannot do honour to his genius without paying homage to France, whose glories, for sixty years, he proclaimed, like a herald, to the world.

A new art was fashioned by his mighty hands ; vast, overwhelming, prodigious, like the modern world and the great democracy for which it is moulded.

Let us laud his genius ; let us chant the pæan of his glory. His glory belongs to us all ; it is the common heritage of our people. Truly it is of glory that we sons of France, children of Henri IV and of Napoleon—of glory that we have need. Glory is as necessary to us as our daily bread. We must have leaders to urge us on to scale the heights of victory. Fifteen years ago, and we were still seeking victory on the fields of battle, and for the nonce it eluded us. Yes, Victory took wing, and we fell broken and bleeding on the stricken field. But when, anon, we rose up once more,

we rediscovered with amazement, with a joy that gave us new strength, we rediscovered, here in our midst, the Victory we thought had forsaken us. Here, in France, was she, with peace and loveliness brooding upon her countenance. She sang, and our enemies listened with enchanted ears, even as we. It was an old man's incantation that had stayed Victory among us—the winged Victory of Poetry.

And now she rears herself in majesty above the poet's tomb. With murmurs of pride we hail her, and with tears of love.

Sad and dear is the office we have performed in laying the humble but spontaneous tribute of our homage on the tomb of Victor Hugo. But a panegyric of the poet's work would hardly be expected from the writer of the literary *causerie* in a Paris Review. It is not upon our shoulders that so great a task should fall.

Nevertheless, we shall speak about Victor Hugo. What other subject could we choose? But though he is to be our theme, we shall

keep within the scope and tone of the *causerie*. We shall content ourselves with scrutinizing just the little finger-nail of the colossus. Or rather, discarding metaphor, let me say that we will relate a few anecdotes of the master, a few minor details, a little harmless gossip, and quote a few verses that are certainly not to be found in his *Collected Works*. In a word, we shall write *currente calamo*, with the idea by which we are all dominated at the moment—the idea of inditing the initial pages of a volume of *Hugotiana*, after the pattern of those *Menagiana* and *Boleana* in which our forefathers collected the pearls of wit that had fallen from the lips of their illustrious dead.

It must therefore be clearly understood that what follows will consist of odds and ends, of shreds and patches, of real *anas*, as people used to call them. Their merit consists in their being comparatively unknown. After all, it is no easy matter to discover anything new to relate concerning a man about whom everything has been said and written, and who has himself alone caused as much ink to flow as

all the rest of his century put together, all save one, the one of whom he, Victor Hugo, has sung so well, to wit, Napoleon.

*Victor Hugo and Madame Judith Gautier.*

It is the daughter of the poet who wrote *Émaux et Camées*, to whom we shall again have recourse for one or two things about Victor Hugo that are not generally known and have never found their way into print. Everybody is aware how close were the ties of friendship, how ardent the literary faith, that attached Théophile Gautier to Victor Hugo, his former master and comrade. We all know, too, that in spite of political upheavals and the animosities they engendered, nothing ever loosened the bond that united these two companions in arms, the Henri IV and the Crillon of the War of the Romantics. We are also aware that the affection he entertained for the father was bestowed no less warmly on the daughter, and with an added refinement of courtesy, a deferential gallantry, that gave the popular poet a place among our old nobility. And on what more charming object could this

wonderful old man have reposed his friendship than on the beautiful and accomplished Judith Gautier, who is so skilled in telling us, in language worthy of her father, of all the wonders of the East, and who, in addition to her store of Latin culture, is rich with all the wisdom of the Mandarins ?

Of this friendship there exists a little literary memorial cast in a mould that is unique among the works of Victor Hugo. Madame Judith Gautier inspired the poet with the one and only sonnet he ever composed. As it is not to be found in any of the published works bearing his name, we quote it here. We quote it with the greater pleasure because it is very beautiful, at once grave and winning. It is dated 1872, and bears the title, *Ave, dea, moriturus te salutat.*

La mort et la beauté sont deux choses profondes  
 Qui contiennent tant d'ombre et d'azur, qu'on dirait  
 Deux sœurs également terribles et fécondes  
 Ayant la même énigme et le même secret.

O femmes, voix, regards, cheveux noirs, tresses blondes,  
 Vivez, je meurs ! Ayez l'éclat, l'amour, l'attrait,  
 O perles que la mer mêle à ses grandes ondes,  
 O lumineux oiseaux de la sombre forêt !



Judith, nos deux destins sont plus près l'un de l'autre  
 Qu'on ne croirait à voir mon visage et le vôtre ;  
 Tout le divin abîme apparaît dans vos yeux,

Et moi, je suis le gouffre étoilé dans mon âme ;  
 Nous sommes tous les deux, voisins du ciel, madame,  
 Puisque vous êtes belle et puisque je suis vieux.\*

Two years before, in the course of the *année terrible* in Paris, during the sternest rigours of the siege, Judith Gautier had received a poetical tribute from the Master. When I call it a poetical tribute, I merely mean that it was in verse. The young muse had been invited to dinner at the old god's house ; but she had

\* HAIL, GODDESS, HE WHO IS SOON TO DIE SALUTES THEE !

Beauty and Death are both unfathomable things,  
 So rich in brilliant azure and so rich in shadow,  
 You might take them for two sisters equally terrible and  
 equally fruitful,  
 Holding within them the same riddle, the same secret.

O women, voices sweet, fair looks, dark hair and tresses blond,  
 Live on, I die ! Brilliance, Love, alluring gifts be yours,  
 Ye pearls whom the great sea mingles with its billows,  
 Ye radiant birds of the sombre forest !

Judith, our two destinies are more nigh to one another  
 Than one would think, beholding your face and mine.  
 All the deeps of Heaven are in your eyes,

And I pass onward into the starry gulf of my soul.  
 We are both of us Heaven's neighbours, lady,  
 Seeing that you are fair and I am old.

been unable to go, wherefore the old god laughingly sent her the following quatrain :

Si vous étiez venue, ô belle que j'admire,  
Je vous aurais offert un dîner sans rival.  
J'aurais tué Pégase et je l'aurais fait cuire  
Afin de vous servir une aile de cheval.\*

There was another occasion on which the famine in Paris prompted Victor Hugo to improvise some lines in a vein of comic gallantry. The siege was drawing to an end, and the poet, who had donned the uniform of the National Guard, invented the following quatrain and recited it to Madame Judith Gautier and some other ladies who composed his audience :

Je lègue à Paris, non ma cendre,  
Mais mon bifteck, morceau de roi ;  
Mesdames, en mangeant de moi,  
Vous verrez comme je suis tendre.†

\* If you had come, O fair one whom I admire,  
I should have offered you a dinner without a rival.  
I would have slain Pegasus, and have had him cooked  
In order that I might regale you with the wing of a horse.

† I bequeath to Paris, not my ashes,  
But my beefsteak, a king's portion ;  
Mesdames, when you come to eat me,  
You will see how tender I am.

That is pure Scarron. That rapsallion, in his day, during the hard times of the Fronde, could not have done better, if so well. Oh, you must not be too critical ! Those four lines do not reach the level of the *Tristesse d'Olympio*, but they do represent a very satisfactory specimen of siege literature. Just then we were dying of cold, hunger and rage, and we needed things like that to restore our gaiety.

So far as I am aware, Madame Judith Gautier did not reply in verse to the great man's rhyming effusions. But, being a fairy, she made, with her own beautiful hands, the loveliest toy in the world and sent it to the poet's grandchildren. It was a magic lantern whose slides, painted by herself, represented the heroes of Victor Hugo's dramas, poems and novels.

*Victor Hugo and some Innkeepers.*—Under this heading we might indite a little chapter on the lighter side of literary history. Victor Hugo, like Béranger's comedians, knew well enough that "seeing's keeping," and that, for an artist, what is taken in by the eye is a possession for ever. So he made little journeys

whenever he could, and he liked to see the countryside. The country of which he saw the most and which he knew the best was France ; wherein he did well. Could there be one more pleasant ? Woods, meadows, lakes, rivers, towers, steeples, ancient ramparts festooned with gilly-flowers ; he noted all things so as to paint them all. He was one of those who think with their eyes, and to whom pictures are a necessity.

Such people are, in other words, what we call poets. But if he took delight in mouldering walls and fresh green foliage, with the ever-changing sky and the fleeting stream, he was very far from being pleased with the inns at which he put up, and, as we are about to learn, he freely consigned the whole tribe of innkeepers to the devil.

I have no complaint to make about that. I can readily believe that, even in 1835, the landlord of *The White Horse* or *The Red Lion* gave but lenten entertainment to such Christian folk as should ask their hospitality. Nay, I hold it certain that the habit of offering the

traveller bad beds and bad food is of more ancient date than that. Howbeit, I have a fondness for the inns in little country towns, and I have pleasant memories of all that I have visited. I slept soundly and supped gaily. The briefest journey has a smack of adventure about it ; a hint of something out of the ordinary which pleases me mightily. I am on friendly terms with all the world and always kindly disposed towards mine host. And so it comes about that I cannot find it in my heart utterly to condemn a certain rascally landlord whose prodigious stomach-part was mirrored in the waters of the Loire, between the towers of the most magnificent and enchanting of Renaissance châteaux. This same knave kept a poultry-run, where the fowls used to soar as high as the clouds, for all the world as though they had been young eagles. You can guess whether they were plump or not. You had to bring them down with the gun just as if they had been the royalest of wild game.

And so it was thus riddled with shot that, by a fate wholly incongruous with their "tame

villatic" nature, they were thrust upon the spit. Never have I looked on aught so tough. I say looked on, for eat of it I could not. And the graceless ruffian had the effrontery to put them down on the bill as "tender" spring chicken. Nevertheless, I forgive him because of what I saw from his windows. I saw the Loire and its green hillsides and a love-cypher on one of the château windows.

I have long since forgiven him for the sufferings he caused me. They tell me he now sits on the Town Council in the radical interest. I am not surprised to hear he has come to such a pass; but I call Heaven to witness that I never desired it. I should only like to know where in the world he got his stomach from, and how he nourished it, for it was certainly not on his own fowls.

I believe that if, for his sins, he had been born fifty years earlier, and if Hugo had put up at his pleasantly situated inn, the rascal would have been made immortal. Hugo—and this is the point of my story—took poetic vengeance on landlords who displeased him.

The first one whose beds and board he rendered memorable was a certain Champenois who offered food and shelter to travellers, somewhere about the year 1825. On quitting his roof, the young poet bequeathed him the following quatrain :

Au diable ! auberge immonde ! Hôtel de la Punaise !  
Où la peau, le matin, se couvre de rougeurs,  
Où la cuisine pue, où l'on dort mal à l'aise,  
O l'entend chanter les commis-voyageurs.\*

History does not tell us whether the landlord put these verses on his signboard.

Ten years later, the poet writes from Laon to M. Foucher as follows :

“ Everything is beautiful at Laon ; church, houses—everything except the horrible inn, *La Hure*, where I slept and where I wrote this little farewell on the wall :

A l'aubergiste de *la Hure*,  
Vendeur de fricot frelaté  
Hôtelier chez qui se fricasse  
L'ordure avec la saleté  
Gargotier chez qui l'on ramasse

---

\* To the devil with thee, inn unclean ! the Bug Hotel !  
Where one's skin, in the morn, is covered with bites,  
Where the kitchen stinks, where one slumbers ill at ease,  
Where commercial travellers yell their noisy songs.

Soupe maigre et vaisselle grasse,  
 Et tous les pous de la cité,  
 Ton auberge, comme ta face,  
 Est hure pour la bonne grâce  
 Et groin pour la propreté.\*

The poet, after delivering himself of these imprecations, adds, "and I must tell you that the landlord is an insolent fellow into the bargain. He makes you eat leathery chicken and laughs in your face, the rascal."

About the same time, the tavernkeepers of Yvetot were served up with the same sauce : they, it appears, having given the poet

Pour salade  
 Ce qu'un lapin malade  
 Laisse dans son clapier.†

The verses that I have quoted do not figure among the great poet's published works.

\* To the landlord of the Boar's Head,  
 Vendor of infected stews,  
 At whose inn dung is fried up with filth,  
 Where the soup is watery and the plates greasy,  
 Where you find all the lice in the city.  
 Your inn, like your face,  
 Is like a boar's head for comeliness  
 And like a pig's snout for cleanliness.

† For salade  
 What a sick rabbit  
 Leaves uneaten in its hutch.



They would doubtless show to ill advantage there ; but in a *causerie* they are well enough. It might be interesting to discover whether denunciations of scurvy innkeepers were not a commonplace with the poets of the romantic school. I am inclined to think they were ; and that in 1830 the true medieval note was wanting, unless you had an innkeeper receiving short shrift at the hands of noblemen or students. But at this point I conclude—and it is high time—my sketch for a study of Victor Hugo and the Innkeepers.

*Victor Hugo and the Immortality of the Soul.*—As is well known, the poet was a strong believer in the existence of another world. Nevertheless, he admitted that the immortality of the soul is, so to speak, optional. At least, that is what we may deduce from a little fable he one day related to M. Schoelcher, his colleague in the Senate, and his friend through good and evil days. M. Schoelcher did not believe in the immortality of the soul. He made no secret of his unbelief, and on one occasion declared to Victor Hugo that, for

his part, he was quite sure that when his body died his soul would die with it.

“Mind you’re not taken at your word !” said Victor Hugo. “Listen to this : One day a poet, having written two verses on a sheet of paper, went out of the room. While he was gone, one of the verses began to speak and said, ‘I know I am immortal.’ Then the other said in its turn, ‘I know not whether I shall live.’ The poet came in again, took up his pen and crossed out the line that had been doubtful about its survival.”

M. Schoelcher, a very stubborn-minded man, was not in the least moved by this parable. We are not greatly surprised at that.

*Victor Hugo applies for a Commissionnaire’s Medal.*—M. Alfred Asseline, who held a post in the Prefecture of Police, a lyric poet and a relative of Victor Hugo’s, received, on March 30, 1849, a note reading as follows :

“This, my dear Alfred, is the candidate for the corps of commissionnaires, of whom I spoke to you. His name is Martin. He is

very honest, very poor, and very deserving of assistance. He has a wife and family. Tell him what he must do to obtain the medal which will help him to live. I shall be as grateful to you as if you were conferring the medal on myself.

“ We shall meet soon, shall we not ?

“ VICTOR H.”

I will confess my belief that in any other age than ours no one would have thought of publishing so unpretentious a note ; but such minor documents are now all the fashion, and as this one is inoffensive and does honour to the poet's kind heart, there is no harm in printing it, though it was never intended for the printer.

*The Month of May in Victor Hugo's Life.*—M. Louis, who was united both to Victor Hugo and to Lamartine in the bond of the noblest of friendships, has written of these two genuises in words that will not die. Again, quite recently, his thoughtful affection inspired him with the idea of compiling a *Victor Hugo*

*Almanack.* It appeared to him that the highest praise that could be bestowed on this indefatigable worker, on this conqueror, would be not so much to seek for him the homage of the multitude, but to lead his Victories, his Triumphs in filial procession before him.

And forthwith he gathered together a sequence of three hundred and seventy-five dates and events relating solely to the Master's life and work.

Looking through this new almanack, I involuntarily paused at the month of May. I looked to see what this month, as it came round year after year, had brought the great man, before bringing him the last, supreme gift. This is what I found :

*May 3, 1820.*—"To Victor Hugo a reserve *Amaranthus* at the Floral Games for his play the *Vierges de Verdun*."

How distant is that May from the May that took him from us !

Victor Hugo was then a child, and the *Académie des Jeux Floraux* a great distinction. Millevoeye, the illustrious and tender-hearted,

had sent in his *Chute des Feuilles* ("Falling Leaves"). The Restoration poets vied with one another for the Golden Amaranthus, the Silver Violet, the Silver Lily, and the Golden Lily. In 1819 young Victor Hugo sent in three plays: The *Derniers Bardes*, the *Vierges de Verdun*, the *Rétablissement de la Statue de Henri IV*. The Toulouse judges gave the Amaranthus to the *Vierges de Verdun*.

Martyres dont l'encens plaît au martyr divin . . . \*

But the Amaranthus which they bestowed was the reserve Amaranthus; that is to say, the Amaranthus not awarded at the previous competitions. They did not give the Golden Amaranthus which is the real and coveted prize for the ode. They were terribly severe fellows, those judges of Toulouse.

In Guernsey, in 1867, when he was publishing the *Toilers of the Deep*, Victor Hugo gave little Alice A—— a doll called Déruchette after the heroine of the new romance, and dressed to resemble her.

\* Martyred heroines whose incense is pleasing to the Divine Martyr . . .

Déruchette was attired after the style affected by Guernsey women in 1768. The poet had had a real costume of a fashionable Guernesiaise, of one hundred years earlier, reproduced in little for the doll, with a hooped petticoat and Rhinestone buckles on her shoes.

Little Alice loved her doll and kept her unbroken for quite a respectable time. When she was asked, "What was the best work of Victor Hugo's during his period of exile?" she made answer, "My doll!"

Victor Hugo, who was a mighty worker, often delivered himself to his friends of this sensible remark :

"A little work is a bore, a great deal is a distraction."

ERNEST RENAN

No one, save perhaps Virgil, exerted a greater influence on Anatole France than did Ernest Renan. It is, I think, not improbable that Renan's "*Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse*," for which he expresses such deep admiration in the following essay, suggested to him the composition of those four volumes—"My Friend's Book," "*Pierre Nozière*," "*Little Pierre*" and "*The Bloom of Life*"—in which, with inimitable grace and charm, he recounts the story of his own childhood and adolescence.



## ERNEST RENAN



WITH your permission, I will devote the whole of my article this week to the consideration of a single book. The book in question is by M. Ernest Renan, and it is entitled *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse*. I can think of no better, no more delightful, book than this.

There is, about the childhood of gifted men, when they themselves tell the story of it, a charm not easy to define, a blend of sweetness and strength that makes a profound impression on us. Heaven forbid that I should be, in any way, astonished at the interest excited by the early life of great men. But if I wanted thoroughly to explain why the subject is so fascinating, and why it stirs us so deeply, I should say that it is

because the childhood of great men bears so striking a resemblance to our own.

Our early years, like theirs, were full of promise. We blossomed forth just as they did ; they alone bore fruit. The fruit will be duly stored up in the granary ; yet the flower, be it barren, or be it fruitful, leaves behind it the memory of its fragrance. I feel that I must give my blessing to genius, because genius, like lowlier gifts, puts forth, in its earliest stages, its tiny fragile flower. Thus the Christian gives thanks to God for becoming like to a little child. Those who have been endowed with the delightful faculty of portraying life in beautiful colours, have never given a more charming example of that gift than when they have represented their dawning sentiments and the delicious innocence of their childish souls. Rousseau has given us an interesting account of his childhood, despite certain avowals he would have been better advised to withhold. Chateaubriand has revealed to us, with his magic pen, the loneliness, the melancholy and the

unappeasable longings that possessed him during his sojourn at Combourg. George Sand never wrote more charmingly than when she told us about the days she passed at her grandmother's side at Nohant. And Dickens, if, as I think, we may recognize him in the touching pictures he gives us of little David Copperfield, has brought tears to our eyes in portraying for us the good little fellow who, in after years, was destined to grow into the kindest of men and the most sensitive of writers. And now, Monsieur Ernest Renan comes to us, in his turn, with the story of certain episodes in his life, selected in order to show us the successive stages in the growth of his mind.

Never before, as I think, has so delicate a sensibility been found conjoined with such powerful intellectual gifts ; and, as we read the *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse*, we cannot but acknowledge that Monsieur Renan's spirit inhabits those lofty altitudes, where the intellect and the affections are indissolubly united.

“ We ought never to write save about the

things we love," he himself says in his preface. " Silence and oblivion are the reward we mete out to everything that strikes us as unlovely or ignoble on our journey through life." It is to this kindly and agreeable philosophy that we shall henceforth turn for the secret that underlies all the writings of this remarkable man—a man whom Science has inspired with the loftiest conceptions of beauty and of love. We shall know that, if he has studied the gods, it is, as he has said, to excite love for the divinity that is within us, and to show that this divine quality still lives and will endure for ever, in the heart of man.

Now it is an altogether remarkable thing that this very book—full as it is of the quality of love—contains a passage which has given pain and surprise to many kindly souls.

You already know, without my telling you, the passage to which I refer : it is that in which friendship—at least friendship, as it is ordinarily understood—is accused of beng rooted in injustice and error.

" I have not cultivated friendship to any

great extent," says M. Renan ; " I have done little for my friends, and they have done little for me.

" I sometimes tell myself what my former instructors were in the habit of inculcating upon me, namely, that friendship is a theft committed to the detriment of Society as a whole, and that, in a higher world, friendship would disappear. Nay, sometimes, when I think of the goodwill that ought to prevail among all men in general, it gives me pain to behold two persons bound together by the ties of an exclusive attachment ; I feel as though I must avoid them, as I should avoid those unjust judges who have forfeited their impartiality and their independence. These mutual attachments are, to my mind, like some esoteric society that narrows the mental outlook, contracts the sphere of appreciation, and imposes a heavy chain on our individual freedom."

I do not deny that, coming from such a man, these words ought to be given due weight. Their principle is sound ; their birthplace is the seminary ; they are capable of producing

great effects ; it is by taking them to heart that a man becomes a great religious teacher, or a great scientific discoverer. Nevertheless, there is implicit in them a hardness against which, do what I may, I cannot but rebel with the whole instinctive force of my being. Neither the moral grandeur of the solitaries of Port-Royal, nor, what is still more compelling, the intellectual beauty of such a man as Renan, will ever make me believe that it is our duty to shun friendship as containing the germ of concupiscence, or that we should hate it as being a crime against mankind in general. I hold, on the contrary, and shall always hold, that friendship, even when it errs on the side of generosity or of love, is the best thing that man has enriched the earth withal. Yes, I cherish Friendship, even though she fail to hold the scales of justice even. And what do we mean by justice ? How can we be just ? In the name of whom or what ? Cruel and vain is the effort to make the law of love subordinate to the law of justice. Brutus was just when he condemned his sons. I ask Monsieur Renan

whether he would care to clasp Brutus by the hand. For my own part, I would far rather kiss the hand of a being steeped in injustice, if only the thought of his children could draw from him tears of love and joy. Let us be unjust, if unjust we must be, but let us love one another ; the world is founded not on justice, which takes life, but on love, which multiplies it.

Ah, how well has Christianity understood that the law of mercy is nature's real law, and that the law of justice is but a dream of human arrogance ! Consider a mother with her children ! Is she merely just towards them ? No, she loves them in defiance of the whole world ! Were it not so, her little ones could never survive. Nor would it fare well with our friends if we dealt with them according to the dictates of strict justice. Any magistrate is bound to give them justice : we owe them something more. They dwell in our sight, within reach of our hand. For us they sum up and typify the human race. Through them, and them alone, we divine the knowledge of

mankind in general. We must never fail in our solicitude for them : for by the services we render them, their hearts are touched ; and no such services can affect the beings whom we do not know. I watch over my neighbour ; I take an interest in his well-being, such as I certainly do not take in the well-being of a Chinaman.

A Christian psychologist whom I never grow weary of studying—I mean Racine—has ascribed to one of the sweetest and chastest spirits that his genius ever created, the same kind of scruple that visited Monsieur Renan under the heading, “Concerning Private Friendships.” Josabeth is afraid of bestowing too much love on little Joas. She says, addressing God, as she thinks of the King who is her child,

Si la chair et le sang, se troublant aujourd’hui,  
Ont trop de part aux pleurs que je répands pour lui,  
Conserve l’héritier de tes saintes promesses  
Et ne punis que moi de toutes mes faiblesses.\*

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\* If flesh and blood, growing troubled with care to-day,  
Have too large a part in the tears I shed for him,  
Keep in safety the inheritor of your holy promises  
And punish none but me for the failings that are mine.



Those scruples of hers came from Port-Royal, just as Monsieur Renan's had their origin at Saint-Sulpice. Both of them, however, are conscious of the promptings of their flesh and blood. It is a beneficent failing, and it does them honour. In vain has Monsieur Renan shut the door of his heart ; in vain has he called to mind the stern injunction of the Saint-Sulpicians—"No private friendships." He has grievously failed to observe this law. His whole life, one may say, constitutes a defection from it : for he bestows a generous share of love and affection on his family, on old friends, on the memory of all those companions, grave or gay, who have gone the way to dusty death.

Read his *Souvenirs* once more. Not a page of the book but contains an avowal or a pæan of friendship or of love ; of love not for humanity in the abstract, but for some one real and definite, the memory of whose countenance is enshrined within his heart. He exemplifies all the delicacy and reticences of friendship ; and I feel that I should be guilty of a sort of

intrusion upon the inner sanctuary of his soul were I so much as to record in the pages of a public periodical the names which he is never weary of repeating to himself—the four feminine names on which he has bestowed the glory of immortality. But outside the hallowed circle of his own family, how numerous and charming are the meetings with his fellows, which he so delightfully records ! how many hours he lavished on the divine beguilements of friendship ! Among the little companions of his childhood there was one little girl—I must make special mention of her—who had a particular fascination for him.

“ Her name,” he tells us, “ was Noémi. She was a little model of goodness and grace. Her eyes were deliciously dreamy, instinct with generosity and intelligence ; her hair was adorably fair. She must have been two years older than I, and the way she used to talk to me was a strange mixture of the elder sister and the childish confidante. We got on splendidly together.

“ Even now I cannot listen to anyone singing *Nous n'irons plus au bois*, or, *Il pleut, il pleut, bergère*, without a little tremor at the heart. Certainly, if it had not been for the fatal bonds that held me in thrall, I should have fallen in love with Noémi two or three years afterwards.”

The bonds, as you may readily divine, were theological ones. He bade farewell to Noémi while she was still a child, and he never saw her again. “ But,” he adds, “ I have thought much about her since ; and when God gave me a daughter, I called her Noémi.”

Where shall we find anything purer and more tender than this friendship and the memory it left behind it.

Of his schoolmasters, too, Monsieur Renan retained an affectionate recollection. Of the good priests of Tréguier he says, “ To them I owe whatever good I may have in me.” The gratitude he evinces towards the professors at the seminaries of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, Issy and Saint-Sulpice, is profound. “ They taught me,” he says, “ to love

truth, to respect reason, and to look seriously upon life."

MM. Olier, Gosselin, Gottofrey, Pinault and Leffir are indebted to their pupil Renan for a fame which they neither expected nor desired, but which, withal, was bestowed on them with an infinite delicacy of touch. I need not here mention Monsieur Berthelot, whom Renan adopted as a brother, and whose friendship, he tells us, was a consolation to him in his days of tribulation. I have said sufficient to show that in a life which lacked nothing in the way of goodness and nobility, "private friendships" were not wanting.

How, then, are we to account for this falling out with friendship which comes to us with such a shock? Is it a remnant of his clerical training? There is no doubt about it. The reserve, which he had acquired as a priest, stood him in good stead as a scholar. Monsieur Renan thus explains and completes the idea he had in mind: "I have never really lived save for the public. They have had the whole of me. There will be no surprise for them

after my death. I have reserved nothing for anyone."

Well and good. Certainly there is nothing more laudable, nothing greater, than to labour for the public good. Still, let him say what he will, had it not been for his family, his friends, his gentle counsellors, Monsieur Renan would never have written those pages of real life and dream life, of truth and poetry which make him alike the guide and the enchanter of the finest spirits of his generation. No one could have written in that way unless he had experienced those yearnings of the flesh whereof Josabeth repented, because she had been brought up in the temple.

Like her, Monsieur Renan, too, was brought up within the temple, and this education it was that gives to his *Souvenirs* a character of incomparable originality. His childhood glided calmly by in the little ecclesiastical town of Tréguier. He had a great affection for its lofty steeple, its cloisters, and its tombs; he loved its atmosphere of sombre piety. He was only at his ease in the company of the

dead, " beside those knights and noble dames wrapt in calm slumber, with their greyhound at their feet and a great torch of stone in their hand."

The lessons he received there left upon him an abiding impression. They were of a serious nature. Moral conduct was the point on which the good priests of Tréguier chiefly dwelt in their sermons.

" These exhortations had a note of solemnity about them which surprised me. . . . Sometimes we should hear all about Jonathas, who died because he ate a little bit of honey. . . . That set me thinking all kinds of things. What was this little bit of honey that makes people die? . . . What filled me most with wonderment was a certain passage in the life of I know not what holy individual of the seventeenth century, who said women were like to firearms that wound from afar. This completely mystified me. I could make nothing of it. I indulged in the wildest hypotheses in my endeavours to guess how a woman could possibly be like a pistol. Could

anything be more puzzling! 'Woman wounds from afar.' And then again, 'You are undone if you touch her.' I couldn't make head or tail of it."

Monsieur Renan adds that these examples of saintly ineptitude were invested, in his eyes, with an authoritativeness that moved him to the very depths of his being. Now this review is intended for the consumption of men and women of the world, and I write, here, for women at least as much as for men. Well, then, Madame, how does all this strike you? What say you concerning the sermon of this worthy priest of Tréguier? It is my idea, strictly between ourselves, that you are not at all angry with him, and that M. Renan has good reason to believe that you would be much more annoyed if you were told that you were no wounders of hearts; that you were harmless and to be approached without danger. The most modest and the most austere among you might not wish to rob any man of his peace of mind; but she would like to be able to do so, if she were so inclined. It tickles your vanity

to think of all the precautions the Church takes against you. When poor Saint Antony cries, "Avaunt, thou beast ! " his terror flatters you. You are enchanted at being more dangerous than you thought you were. You suffer fear to have a free hand because you think that love has nothing to lose by it ; and you are perfectly right. Yes, indeed ! Let yourselves be feared ; love will not lose thereby. As for me personally, I never loved you so much as when I feared you like the werewolf.

The old Breton sermonizes, and his young disciple reminds me of some lines of Corneille, which I will recite to you, just to show you how terribly the Church is afraid of you. They are taken from the *Imitation*, and they run like this :

Fuis avec un grand soin la pratique des femmes ;  
 Ton ennemi par là peut savoir ton défaut.  
 Recommande en commun aux bontés du Très-Haut,  
 Celles dont les vertus embellissent les âmes  
 Et sans en voir jamais qu'avec un prompt adieu,  
 Aime-les toutes, mais en Dieu.\*

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\* Take heed that thou flee the company of women ;  
 By that road thy enemy may find the vulnerable.  
 Commend to the mercies of the Most High, in general,



Ah, my sisters, that is wise counsel indeed ; and what blood and tears are in store for those who heed it not ! But there ! Be ye not troubled. It will never be heeded so long as the breath of life and the light of day caress your lovely form. Be not troubled, my sisters. Till Time shall be no more, men will go on cutting each others' throats for you. Meanwhile, those who pay you the homage of a love which, though fervent indeed, is nevertheless discreet, wholly disinterested ; those who bring to your worship an unincarnate passion, enjoy the reward of their piety, for they have visions of you which transcend, in beauty and splendour, the reality itself. After all, theirs is the happier lot. Do you remember that splendid passage at the beginning of volume two of the *Histoire des Origines du Christianisme* ? Do you remember how it concludes with the following words : "*Noli tangere* ? That is the watchword of those who

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All those whose souls are adorned by virtues  
And, never seeing them save to bid them a swift God-speed,  
Love them all, but in the Lord.

love greatly." I think that women generally are drawn to M. Renan because they feel that in him they have a gifted friend and an enchanting portraitist.

The *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse* are followed by an epilogue and preceded by a preface which unite the past and the present, and which show us the young man of long ago side by side with the elderly intellectual giant of the present day. He speaks to the world, and the world gives heed—the world, but not the masses. M. Renan will never be a deputy. It is hardly likely that he will get into the Upper House, even by the election of the members of that House, who insist on the candidates' adopting the party programme. Monsieur Renan's ideas are addressed to the aristocracy of the intellect; they come with a disagreeable surprise to narrow-minded politicians, who like to measure other people by their own bushel. Moreover, would he himself be able to evolve any practical policy from his intellectual speculations? I doubt it. In any case, none of the parties would listen

to him. They never listen to anybody. They are rich in one thing : their plentiful lack of wit.

In the delightful book we have perused together, and which I close with reluctance, I find this salutary reflection, " The real men of progress are those who begin with a profound respect for the past. All that we do, all that we are, is the outcome of immemorial labour."

If all the gifted souls in the world were to unite in giving utterance to this maxim, would it serve to chasten a single one of our political firebrands ? Should we perceive any diminution in the number of those little manuals of citizenship which, in order to make us love our country, picture it to us as plunged in twelve centuries of barbarism, and which take a pleasure in assigning to us for ancestors a stupid peasantry or a cruel and rapacious nobility ? No, nothing would be of any avail. The ignorant will go on failing to understand the necessary conditions of social development, and expecting trees without roots to bring forth fruit.

## VIEWS ON THE WAR

*The following letter and the article which succeeds it, have been kindly communicated by Monsieur Michel Corday. They are of peculiar interest, since they reveal the modification which Anatole France's views about the Great War underwent, as the struggle proceeded and as the advent of peace was, as he held, wilfully and criminally deferred by those whose material interests were served by a prolongation of the strife.*

## VIEWS ON THE WAR

A LETTER WRITTEN BY ANATOLE FRANCE  
TO THE EDITOR OF " L'HUMANITÉ " IN  
JULY 1922



DEAR CITOYEN CACHIN,  
I hope you will call the attention of your readers to Michel Corday's new book, *Les Hauts Fourneaux*. They ought to know of it.

It contains ideas about the origins and the conduct of the war that you will appreciate, ideas that, even now, are all too little known in France. In particular we shall see that the World War was essentially the work of the capitalists. We shall see that it was the great manufacturers of the various European countries who, first of all, willed the war, then made it inevitable, and, finally, prevented it

from coming to an end. They made it their trump card ; they put all their money on it, reaped immense profits, and prosecuted it with such ardour that they brought ruin on Europe, on themselves, and put the whole world out of joint.

Hear what Corday has to say on the subject ; for it is a subject on which he concentrates all the force of his convictions, all the resources of his talent.

“ Those men,” he says, “ are like their own blast-furnaces, like those feudal towers which stand up face to face along the frontiers, things whose insatiable maws must unceasingly be filled, day and night, with ore and fuel, so that a constant stream of molten metal may pour from beneath them. With unappeasable voracity they cry aloud for fuel, yet more fuel, and demand that all the riches of the soil, all the fruits of labour, ay, and men too, men in herds, in armies, should be flung pell-mell into the gaping furnace, so that the smelted ore may accumulate in ever-growing masses at their feet. Yes, such is their emblem, the

device by which we may know them. They it is, who are the real blast furnaces " (p. 163).

And so those who died in the war knew not why they died. It is the same in all wars. But not to the same degree. The men who fell at Jemmapes were not deceived as to the cause for which they gave their lives. This time the ignorance of the victims is tragic. They think they are dying for their country : in reality, they are dying for the manufacturers.

These, our present-day masters, possess the three things necessary for great modern enterprises : factories, banks and newspapers. Michel Corday shows us how they employed these three mighty engines. And in particular he explains a phenomenon which had caused us great surprise, not so much from its nature as from its excessive intensity, an intensity unparalleled in history ; I mean how it was that hatred of a nation, a whole nation, spread abroad throughout France with unprecedented violence, a violence far transcending the hatred engendered in this same country by the wars of the Revolution and the Empire. I am not



speaking of the wars of the olden days. They bred no hatred in the hearts of the French people. But with us, this time, it was a hatred that did not die away with the coming of peace ; a hatred that made us forget our own interests and lose all sense of reality, without our even feeling the passion which possessed us, save perhaps now and again to find it not violent enough.

Michel Corday shows us quite clearly that this hatred was worked up by the newspapers, the same newspapers which, at this very hour, are guilty of fostering a state of mind which is luring, not only France, but the whole of Europe, to irremediable disaster. " The spirit of vengeance and hatred," says Michel Corday, " is kept alive by the Press, whose uncompromising dogmatism will brook no questionings, no lukewarmness. Those who do not agree with it are branded as cowards or criminals."

When the war was drawing to a close, I sometimes displayed my astonishment at this wholesale hatred directed against a whole people. Others seem to look upon it as natural enough,

but to me it seemed something novel and I could not adjust my vision to it at all. A lady of my acquaintance, a woman of great intelligence and gentle disposition, assured me that if it was a novelty, it was, at all events, a very welcome one. "It is a sign of progress," said she, "and a proof of the ameliorative influence that time has had upon our moral ideas. Hatred is a virtue ; it is perhaps the highest of all the virtues."

I humbly inquired how it was possible to hate a whole people.

"Think, Madame," said I, "a whole people ! It is a big undertaking, is it not ? A people composed of so many million individuals, all different, no single one bearing any resemblance to another, a people of whom only the tiniest minority wanted war, and of whom a still tinier minority is responsible for it, and of whom the vast and innocent majority have suffered death and agony. Hating a people, a race ! Why, it is like hating contraries, like hating good and evil, beauty and ugliness."

What strange madness ! I really do not know if we are beginning to recover from it even now. I hope so. Recover we must ! Michel Corday's book is a timely one. It inspires us with salutary ideas. I hope it will be widely read. Europe is not made up of isolated states, independent one of another. It forms a harmonious whole. To destroy a portion of it, is to inflict injury on all the rest. Our salvation lies in our being good Europeans. Without that, all is misery and disaster.

Fraternal greetings,

ANATOLE FRANCE.

## THE FIERY FURNACE

## THE FIERY FURNACE

AN ARTICLE CONTRIBUTED BY ANATOLE  
FRANCE TO "LA RÉPUBLIQUE"



MICHEL CORDAY has written a book which has deeply moved me and brought me great enlightenment. Until I read it, I had not properly understood the causes of the war which burst upon us in 1914. This book has revealed them to me. It has taught me the part played by metallurgical and financial interests throughout the world in the preparation and prolongation of that tremendous upheaval which the capitalists looked upon as a stroke of business, and a very profitable one into the bargain.

The book which has come to me as such a revelation consists of two volumes. The first appeared last year under the title of *Les Hauts Fourneaux*, and was widely read. The second,

*La Houille Rouge*, which has just been published, was all but smothered at birth. The leading journals hardly mentioned it. They did not want people to know about it, and they were right. If the truth is suffered to leak out, how is public opinion to be manipulated ?

*La Houille Rouge* shows us how the war profiteers basely endeavoured to prolong the conflict by filling the masses with the insane hope of crushing Germany out of existence. And so, with a great deal of wire-pulling and with the enthusiastic approval of the mob, they succeeded in bringing to nought every successive chance of conciliation that occasion seemed to offer.

*The 16th October, 1917.*—"At this very moment an honourable settlement of this terrible conflict might be brought about. Are the Allies in need of guarantees ? Then what are those colonies which the Germans prized so dearly, but of which, from some mysterious motives of delicacy, no mention is ever made ? Do not the Allies still hold the freedom of the seas, despite the spread of submarine warfare ?

Are they not imposing a blockade which the entry of America into the war will enable them to convert into a stranglehold? Have they not superiority of numbers on their side? If, when peace comes, they remain as closely united as they are to-day, will they not be masters of the economic situation and contrive, by holding out the threat of a trade boycott, to impose what terms they choose upon the Germans, who are generally reputed to crave for nothing so much as an outlet for their goods? Have they not humbled the Prussian military spirit, now that the mighty war machine, which it had taken two generations to construct and put in position, has for three years past been floundering in stupid and hopeless impotence?

“ Ah, no ! There must be no peace yet ! Why not ? Why, doubtless because the war-mongers are not, as yet, in a position to possess themselves of all the spoils—mines, railways, oil-fields, customs, territories, indemnities—which they had looked forward to sharing out among themselves.”

There are fifty such pages in *La Houille Rouge*, and it were well if they were inscribed on the walls of every Town Hall throughout the length and breadth of France.

Yes, this book of Michel Corday's has taught me, now that it is too late, the horrible, the frightful truth. Not that, even while the war was in progress, I was not occasionally visited by suspicions that we were being deceived. I went so far as to write, at the beginning of hostilities, an article on the necessity for a prompt and humane peace. It was a passage that did me honour, and because of it, respectable citizens poured out the vials of their wrath upon me in every public print. But I had not sufficient courage, or sufficient knowledge of what was going on, to continue proclaiming the truth. I even allowed myself to deliver little orations to the soldiers, living or dead, upon which I look back as the worst action I ever wrought in my life.

To-day, the Brotherhood of Man is farther off than it was when the Emperor Augustus solemnly dedicated, in Rome, an altar to Peace.



War, which has been the incessant scourge of Europe from the Barbarian invasions down to the present day, War, which was virtually the sole occupation of our kings and nobles, has taken on a fresh vigour since the Revolution which transformed the structure of our society.

Under the old régime, War was exclusively the occupation of the great ones of the land. Under the new régime, it became the occupation of the nation as a whole. It drew fresh sustenance from the increased number of the combatants engaged in it, from the greater bitterness of the hatreds that inspired it, and above all, from the multiplicity of interests it was expected to satisfy. War is increasing in importance every day. It was once merely a means by which princes strove to settle disputes about territory ; now it is a means by which manufacturers seek to add to their wealth. Everywhere it is the same. Countries, where the monarchical form of government still survives, such as Germany, for example, raised armies which were at once as numerous

and as popular as the armies of democratic France. What was once a pastime of princes, has become a passion with the common people. Europe is threatened with annihilation in the gigantic Armageddon for which the nations are making ready. For it needs the heedlessness and the ignorance of the nations and their leaders not to recognize the menace that hangs over Europe.

However, the Future is a fertile region for the theorists to disport themselves in, and there is no limit to the hopes and fears you may plant within it. The progress of the proletariat cannot be gainsaid. In France, where they are less numerous than in the other countries of Europe, their action is impeded by difficulties and dissensions. In England, where commerce reigns supreme, the proletariat are strong enough to make the ruling classes tremble ; while in Germany, the proletariat, numerous and highly organized, are waiting the signal to join forces with their brethren throughout the world. They have held out their hands to their comrades in France. That

is of good augury for the peace of the future. There is yet another. The day will come when separate nations will have ceased to exist. These are hard words for the present generation to hear, and, in France, harder then elsewhere. Nevertheless, they are true. *Debemur morti nos nostraque*. The separate nations will come to an end, and they will, in all probability, be replaced by the United States of Europe, the Republic of the World.

You tell me that when that comes to pass, wars of nation against nation will be succeeded by civil wars. But it is no easy matter to argue about what will take place in a future from which we are apparently sundered by several generations. Moreover, we must never despair of the human race.

ERNEST RENAN

*The following panegyric, delivered at the Trocadéro on the occasion of Renan's Centenary, possesses, in addition to its moving eloquence, the pathetic interest of being one of the last speeches of importance delivered by Anatole France in public.*

## ERNEST RENAN

A SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE TROCADÉRO BY  
ANATOLE FRANCE ON THE OCCASION OF  
THE CENTENARY OF ERNEST RENAN



ESDAMES, CITOYENS,

Daniel Berthelot has explained to you in excellent language under what auspices we are gathered here to celebrate the centenary of Ernest Renan.

The custom of doing honour to our great men originated with democracy. It began in France at the time of the Revolution and replaced the cult of princes who, under the old régime, were the sole recipients of public honours. Auguste Comte made it one of the dogmas of the Religion of Man. This year witnesses the celebration of the centenaries of Pasteur and Renan. To the homage of the

Sorbonne, we have deemed it incumbent upon us to add our own, without, however, being haunted by any great fear that what we shall have to say will be a repetition of what has already been said in official circles.

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Renan merits our gratitude because he lived a life wholly devoted to Science—the progress of which alone makes nations great and happy. He directed his energies with unwearied zeal to the study of languages, to exegesis, to textual criticism, to æsthetics, to history, to all the sciences whereby we improve our knowledge of mankind, and from which he hoped that the philosophical, political and moral codes of the future would one day emerge. His was a mind too free and too overflowing to be confined within a system ; but he, nevertheless, firmly took his stand on the great questions which affect the welfare of the human race.

He has been called an aristocrat : it must be explained that he knew but one aristocracy, the aristocracy of the mind. He has been looked

on as a reactionary. A strange reactionary, the man who said, "The most advanced idea is the most true and the most practicable." We will not judge his political opinions by a single phrase ; but it appears clear that he was in favour of reducing governmental action to something very inconsiderable, and that he held that freedom of thought should be completely respected.

It would ill become me to lay too much stress on the links between ourselves and the great Renan. We must not attempt to reduce genius to our own measure ; we ought to leave it more freedom than we ourselves can take or even conceive. We must also bear in mind that, in the language of this philosopher, who, were he alive to-day, would be one hundred years old—nay, infinitely older, for he lived in the days when Greece was flourishing and Rome was mistress of the world—words have not always the narrow significance which they have for us, and that the terms " empire " and " republic " represent to the historian of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius ideas vaster and more



diverse than those which, with our far more restricted experiences, are familiar to ourselves.

Having said that, it must be confessed that Renan was hardly favourable to the Republic, under the Second Empire, a time when people used to speak well of it, and that he evinced little more approval of it when it came to life again. This opinion is certainly not to be taken as exemplary at the present time when we have nothing left of the Republic but the name, and when that name is the only guarantee of our threatened liberties. But to understand Renan's politics, to discover the spot which his profound intelligence divined as the enemy's stronghold, we must study the times in which he lived. What alarmed him the most was the growing influence of the commercial spirit in our midst, the progress of that ignorant, selfish and greedy middle class which had grown up under the July Government, and which he had good reason to fear, since, now that it has attained the summit of its powers, it coerces and oppresses the working classes and decides

the questions of peace or war throughout the world.

Renan (and this has not been sufficiently emphasized) loved the people, the working classes, who produce and procure for us wealth and leisure, the working classes to whom we are indebted for everything, and to whom we only give just sufficient to keep them from dying of hunger. He wished to make them sharers in the intellectual and moral life of the nation. In the *Future of Science* we read as follows :

“ Every one should find, in the society into which he is born, the means of attaining the perfection of his nature ; every one should find in society, so far as his understanding is concerned, what his mother gives him in respect of his body, namely, the milk, the primordial nutriment which he cannot procure for himself.

“ The perfection aimed at cannot co-exist save with a certain degree of material well-being. In a normal society man should have a right to the primary means necessary to

enable him to attain to those conditions of life."

It would be a gross misconception of Renan's character to write him down as lukewarm or moderate in his opinions. Because he is skilled in seizing and conveying the most delicate shades of meaning, because his style is flexible and willowy, the careless reader looks on him as a thinker who cannot make up his mind, over-cautious, a lover of middle terms and half measures. He is, on the contrary, the most determined, decided, nay, I will go so far as to say, the most extreme thinker who ever busied himself with science and philosophy. He had strong passions. When he wrote for himself alone, his words, by their very disorder, betrayed the violent commotion of his mind. Would you like to catch him angry, furious, beside himself? Open the *Nouveaux Cahiers de Jeunesse*, and you will find this blazing, thundering passage on the Tsar Nicolas :

" Oh, how monstrous a thing is this absolute monarchy, opposing the will of the people, and riding roughshod over the individuals

composing it ; ordering the knout for one, exiling another to Siberia, regardless of everything, provided only the despot keeps his place. If the masses did but know ! And when one reflects that force is on their side, and only prestige and opinion on the other, it is frightful. If I could but get hold of this Tsar, I would give him a thrashing ; I would spit in his face, make a laughing stock of him, have him judged and condemned to death by the populace, and send him to be drowned amid the howls and execrations of the mob. Ah ! Your Majesty, do not human beings also count for something ? Play the monarch now ! Look at the pose ! Oh, horror ! How hideous is this way of looking on one's subjects as beasts that must be kept in leash, and against whom one must ever be on one's guard ! ”

We owe a great debt of gratitude to Renan for bringing his powerful means of scientific research to bear upon the obscure origins of the religion which still holds sway over a large portion of the civilized world and shares, upon the surface of this planet, 'the empire of

consciences with Islam, Buddhism and the ancient beliefs of China and Japan.

“No department of human knowledge should be cut off from scientific investigation,” declared Renan’s illustrious friend, Marcellin Berthelot. The *Life of Jesus*, published in 1863, was followed by six volumes devoted to a study of Christianity down to the third century. Towards the end of his life, Renan produced a history of Israel which shows what Javeh was before he became Christian, and how, after showing himself a stupid and ferocious being, “an abominable creature,” in the words of his historian, he transformed himself under the influence of the prophets of Israel, became better, more just, more human than the Jupiter of the Roman Pantheon whom he deservedly replaced. Happy would his followers have been if, in his amazing elevation, he had always retained the same tolerance, the same kindness.

In his *Life of Jesus*, he, whom the Christians call the Divine Son of God, is represented by Renan as the most virtuous and most lovable

of men, albeit still a man. That was his crime, the outrage which, among the clergy and their followers, was hailed with an outburst of indignation, fury and horror. The Bishops foamed at the mouth ; torrents of abuse were poured out on the historian. The Government, as usually happens with Governments, was terrified, knew not what to do, and finally saved its face by declaring the book illegal. The Minister of Public Instruction deprived the historian of his Chair at the College de France. Sixty years have now gone by since the appearance of this book which scandalized the Church and brought a ray of comfort to the champions of free thought. What is to be said of it now ? The work of the later exegetists, the great critical labours of Alfred Loisy lead us to believe that no further Life of Jesus will be attempted. The historic foundations, on which the biographer of 1863 based his conclusions, have crumbled away. But does that mean that Renan's work is destroyed ? By no means. *The Life of Jesus*, so furiously denounced on its appearance by

the clerics, will not perish. It will live ; it will live, cherished and venerated in the Christian conscience which at first knew it not ; it will become sacred in the estimation of the Modernist theologian. For the Churches of the future it will be a fifth Gospel, the Gospel of later days.

The six volumes, which form the sequel to this extraordinary book, and which bring the Christian Church down to the reign of Marcus Aurelius, give us a vivid picture of the ancient world at the beginning of its decline. Renan created a new way of writing history by blending, by incorporating with the narrative of facts, all kinds of sidelights which illustrate them, and philosophic reflections which enable us to estimate their bearing and importance. In this manner he weaves a historic tapestry of a richness unknown before his day.

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If Renan had lived to see the war which broke out in 1914, he would have beheld the bringing to pass of one of his prophecies. " No European nation," he once wrote, " can

henceforth aspire to hegemony. If any one of them so much as gave a sign of aiming at it, all the other nations would unite to overthrow it."

What Renan foresaw came to pass in 1914. By her military, industrial and commercial power, Germany made herself as many enemies as there are nations in the Old World. Renan had no love of war, war which arrests political progress and brings ruin upon the nations. But he did not believe that the quarrel between France and Germany was ended by the war of 1870. He never doubted that it would engender another war, and he urged his country to consent to the greatest sacrifices in order to be ready for it. We may therefore be certain that he would have greatly rejoiced to see two fair provinces restored to us, on condition that the restoration was in full accord with the wishes of their inhabitants. You will hear shortly what his convictions were on this point. He would have rejoiced that they should be given back to us even at the cost of a war which decimated and ruined us, and which was



prolonged beyond what was necessary for reasons which we do not completely understand.

But what would have pained him, what would have offended his keen logical sense and his greatness of heart, is that so terrible a war should have been followed by a treaty which does not end it, and which is but the organization of disorder, of hatred, of discord and misery in this unhappy Europe of ours. And what also would have grieved him, perhaps, however, without surprising him, would have been to see our country, this land of light and liberty, fall a prey to that spirit of ignorance, superstition and intolerance which war always brings in its train, and which it will, perhaps, cost us a great effort to expel.

I am firmly convinced that Renan, in his wisdom, would have thought and felt like this when he saw the state in which we are in to-day.

But, so far as that is concerned, and whether I am right or whether I am wrong, I accept

full responsibility for the sentiments with which I credit him.

Renan frequently asked himself what constitutes a nation, and what is its *raison d'être*. He has summed up his ideas on this great question in a discourse of some thirty pages of incalculable value—a discourse which would ensure the tranquillity of the nations, if those who rule them would but act upon its injunctions at the very first sign of danger. He did not underestimate the importance of this work ; for he, who was always so modest, and never gave the slightest praise to the greatest of his writings, recommends it to the attention of his readers in the preface to the volume of which it forms a part, namely, “Speeches and Lectures.”

And, of a surety, he was right. In this slender sheaf of pages, so rich in matter, the philosopher asks the question, “What is it that makes a nation ?” Is it the language ? No. The language invites union, it does not compel it. Is it a question of race ? No. The right of the Germanic race over such and such a

province cannot be stronger than the right of the inhabitants of that province over themselves. Racial considerations count for nothing in the constitution of modern nations. France is Celtic, Iberian, German. Germany is Celtic, German and Slavonic. Is it religion? No, it is not religion either that makes a modern nation. Every man believes what he wishes and is not responsible for his beliefs to anyone. Is it a matter of geography? No, it is not even that. A nation is not a group determined by the configuration of the soil. It is not a civilized race that robs its neighbour of a river or a mountain chain in order to obtain a frontier capable of easy defence. And having shown that it was neither the language, nor the race, nor religion, nor geography that makes a nation, Renan explained what it really is that does so. It is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; it is the present agreement, the existing desire to live together, the desire to go on maintaining, unimpaired, the heritage as originally bequeathed.

Men's wills are liable to change. Who does not change? Nations are not things that last for ever. They had a beginning: they will have an end. A European confederation will probably take their place.

That is the most beautiful, the most pacific, and the most true to the spirit of equity of all definitions that have ever been given of a nation. May it one day find a place in the hearts and minds of all men.

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O Renan, revered and beloved Master, by an inestimable boon of fate it was granted me to know you, and to draw near to your presence! I have heard you speak, and your discourse was always full of simplicity, always brave and true. You asked, I believe, that these words should be graven on your tomb, "He loved truth." Truth was a passion with you all your life long. You were so greatly in love with truth that sometimes you were led to banish everything in the nature of ornament from your discourse; sometimes even to rob your style of its most magnificent vesture

in order that your thoughts might appear in all their nakedness.

Master, that same Truth which you set above everything, I have endeavoured unfalteringly to make heard to-day, bringing you thus the only tribute that is worthy of you.

PAUL LOUIS COURIER

*Paul Louis Courier was a writer particularly dear to Anatole France, who speaks of him as "the most admirable of letter writers," and praises him for the zeal with which he upheld, in an age of romantic exuberance and flamboyant exaggeration, the classic purity of the French language.*

*The following oration, delivered towards the close of his life, shows that the Master's mind had lost none of its elasticity, his diction none of its beauty.*

## PAUL LOUIS COURIER

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BY ANATOLE FRANCE  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE CENTENARY  
OF PAUL LOUIS COURIER



ESDAMES ET CHERS AMIS,

The Committee formed to commemorate the establishment founded by Paul Louis Courier, a hundred years ago, at La Chavonnière, have invited their old neighbour at Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire to attend this village festival at which agriculture, the arts, and the things of the mind are held up to honour. For this favour, I thank them with all my heart, and especially the Maire, so beloved by all his people, and that excellent schoolmaster of Veretz, Monsieur Marchadier, to whom we are indebted for a learned account of this pretty



town which, just now, in a moment of absent-mindedness, I referred to as a village. I pray the citizens of Veretz not to take umbrage at the term, coming as it does from one who loves the fields, from a countryman who will, straightway, show you that he is a genuine Tourainian by eagerly inquiring whether the vines are doing well, and whether you have hopes that your unremitting toil will be rewarded by an abundant harvest. You will soon be devoting yourselves to those rustic labours and those homely rejoicings which the season on which we are entering brings back, year after year, from the most ancient times within the memory of man.

“The fullness of Autumn, the time of the grape harvest, having come, every man was in the fields busily preparing for his labours,”—so it runs in the *Pastoral*—“the men bearing the grapes to a bin and treading them therein. . . . And as the custom is at these feasts of Bacchus, when the grapes are a-gathering, a goodly number of women from the country roundabout had been bidden to the harvest

to lend their aid. They prepared food for the harvesters and gave them of last year's wine to drink ; and, thereafter, they themselves fell to gathering the clusters from the lowest branches of the vines."

That, my dear friends, is Greek, and Greek of the most delicate, very gracefully rendered by Paul Louis, to whose memory we shall address ourselves without more ado ; Paul Louis, *vigneron*, as he used to like to call himself. Nowadays, we say *viticulteur*. But Paul Louis, you see, spoke French.

Monsieur Marchadier has given you an excellent account of his life in the country ; but you must know, my friends, that before he became a wine-grower, Courier was a mounted artilleryman. He went to the front in 1792 and for fifteen years fought in the ranks of the armies which withstood the coalition of kings and saved the country. I am not going to hold him up to you as a model soldier, as a second La Tour d'Auvergne. His independence, his keenly speculative mind, his restless and sensitive spirit made strict

obedience to military discipline a very difficult matter for him.

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To be quite just, we must bear in mind that, in those days, the most dashing and courageous officers often took great liberties with discipline, witness the heroic and charming La Salle who, when in camp on the banks of the Adige, made his way through the enemy lines by night in order to keep tryst with an Italian princess at Vicenza. With a careless disregard of danger, Courier would go wandering off on the track of some piece of sculpture or Greek manuscript. He was an accomplished officer, a skilful horseman, who flattered himself that he understood Xenophon, when Xenophon spoke of horses, better than the most learned Hellenists ; an indefatigable and most daring adventurer, and that despite the attacks of blood-spitting which had many times nearly carried him off. Nevertheless, it must be confessed he had not the true military spirit ; the *feu sacré* of the born soldier was not his. Once, in 1809, he thought

he felt the glow of it and begged for a chance of distinguishing himself before the Emperor. But the fire was soon out—a mere blaze of straw. After Wagram, Paul Louis' sole enthusiasm was for Greek, and from that time forth he only lived for Science and Beauty. The war had left him anything but rich, witness a letter which he wrote in 1813 to the Princess of Salm: "I am striving," he says, "to put my wretched affairs into something like order. When I say wretched do not imagine that I am complaining of my lot. I know that many worthier men than I are far worse off; and when I think how little my friends Socrates and Phocion had to call their own, I am ashamed of my wealth. Well, then, I am getting my affairs in order. Do you know why? To go to Athens. 'Tis a vow I must fulfil. Every Greek with a dash of the Pagan in him, like me, will die content if it has been vouchsafed him once to salute the land of Athene and the Arts."

A man of little faith, Paul Louis had entertained small love for the Republic and

still less for the Empire. Every one is familiar with the letter which he wrote from Plaisance in May 1804, concerning the *plébiscite* in the army. Later on, he polished up this letter at his leisure, but he did not rob it of its character.

“Bonaparte the soldier, the chief of the Army, the greatest captain in the world, wants to be called ‘Your Majesty.’ To be a Bonaparte, and want to be called ‘Sire.’ Why, it’s asking to be degraded ! ”

And then, when Lieutenant Maire asked him, “Why are you so anxious for him to be Emperor ? ” our man replies, “So as to be done with the thing and get on with our game of billiards. And you, why don’t you want him to be Emperor ? ”

“I don’t know, but somehow, I used to think he was made for something better.”

That sort of thing bespeaks the philosopher, the intellectual, the wise man looking on with the smile of an amused spectator at the world and its doings, and not by any means the man of action. Governments think

they have nothing to fear from an inoffensive and indifferent person like that, from a lover of peace and quiet who, amid the overthrow of republics and the rise and fall of Empires, only thinks about playing billiards and reading old books. Well, don't let the rulers of the country be too sure. They make a mistake in disregarding the intellectuals. They gain nothing by pushing them too far. Sometimes, as we shall see, they lose a great deal.

\* \* \* \*

When Napoleon fell and the Bourbons were restored to the throne, Courier was busy with his translations from the Greek—a thing he did better than anybody. He had married a young and attractive woman, and regarded politics with tranquil indifference. Not being indebted to Bonaparte for any advancement or honours, he was regarded in a favourable light by the Royalists. The nobles smiled on him ; the people in office flattered him and tried to win him over. He would have let them have their way had it not been for his honesty, his universal tenderness, the milk of

human kindness that was in him, and his gentleness towards the human race as a whole, which, compensating for his lack of energy, caused him, in spite of himself, to stand forth as the opponent of cruelty and injustice. He would let no one do ill to humble folk if he could help it. He loved the common people, he loved them in his own way, it is true, but he loved them sincerely—the common people who, as he was wont to say, “build houses, till the fields, ply their crafts, read, ponder, invent, bring the arts to perfection and also know how to fight, if you can call fighting a branch of knowledge.” When he saw the diehards and the whole-hoggers at work, when he met peasants, in fetters, coming along the road in charge of gendarmes, being marched off to the prison at Tours because they had not touched their hats to the *curé*, or had gone a-drinking in the tavern during church hours, he waxed indignant and, quivering with rage, indited his first pamphlet which, describing the deplorable condition of a village in Touraine, also described the state

of affairs in France as a whole. This pamphlet was eagerly devoured. Right down to 1821, Courier continued to wage the war of common sense against the follies of the Government. At that time there was no longer any such thing as an independent newspaper. The Villèle Government had bought up or suppressed them all; that is what was called liquidating the opposition. So it came about that the public devoured these witty and sensible little pamphlets which we might well call the Provincial Letters of Liberalism. Like a voice crying in the wilderness, Courier, who had become a celebrity, acted powerfully on public opinion. The Government became alarmed and brought an action against the pamphleteer. What happened? Why, that which always does happen. Things went as they always do in political trials. The prosecution followed the same course as all political actions brought by the people in power. The Government readily obtained a conviction—a conviction which discredited the authorities, debased the judges and ennobled



their victim. "The more they persecute me," said Paul Louis, "the higher I shall stand in the public esteem." He spoke truly. The Government tried to recover their position by a second prosecution and brought an action against Béranger the song-writer. Béranger was condemned, but the Government was no better off.

These pamphlets of Courier's have lost none of their interest for the readers of to-day, despite the changes that have taken place in private and public life. They inculcate no doctrines, they elaborate no system, but they abound in good sense and the milk of human kindness. They are still the delight of people of sensitive literary taste who hail in Courier the best writer of his times, the purest, the most sober, the most exact and, at the same time, the most charming, or, to express the whole thing in a single word, the least romantic.

Death, in tragic form, struck him down just when he was attaining the perfection of his art. I could show you how his style exhibits the lively grace of La Fontaine and

the elegant simplicity of Pascal. I could make you conscious in his diction of that purity which brings us back once more to the golden age of French literature. But it will be more fitting if I now give place to Mademoiselle Maille of the Comédie Française, who, with her charming voice, will read you a page or two from Paul Louis himself. One word more and I have done.

My dear friends and neighbours, it is impossible for us not to suffer our thoughts to muse on those who are fighting for us with such heroic constancy. They deserve something better than those grandiloquent eulogies which we bestow upon them and in which we seem to be sounding the praises of our own merits. And since, thanks to Paul Louis, our minds are all aglow with memories of ancient Greece and the city of Athene, let us dwell upon the thoughts which Thucydides ascribes to Pericles and which may be summed up as follows :

“When I have shown that Athens is governed by good laws, I shall have bestowed

sufficient praise on those who have laid down their lives in her defence.”

Well, then, since we one and all are convinced that our soldiers are fighting for Justice and Freedom, let us strive—we who have returned to our homes or who have never left them—let us strive to preserve for them, for these citizen-soldiers, a country where Freedom and Justice may ever find a home.

SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY

*The pilgrimage of the human race, the history of its slow and faltering emergence from barbarism to civilization, was a subject which always exerted a profound fascination over the mind of Anatole France. As might be expected, and as the following preface will show, Anatole France entertained a deep admiration for the work of Sir James Frazer.*

# SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY

BY SIR JAMES GEORGE FRAZER



SIR JAMES GEORGE FRAZER has applied to the study of human origins methods and means not hitherto employed. And that, undoubtedly, is a great point. Unlike Petit Jean, who used to say, "What I know about best is my beginning," Man, for a long time, knew nothing of his origin, and what he knows now is little enough. He owes it to Sir James George Frazer that he possesses, at last, some notion of how he passed from barbarism to civilization.

It is by studying the savage races that this learned man affords us fresh knowledge concerning primitive humanity. I had no need to say what everybody knows ; but it is a

pleasure to behold a new science brought to birth.

With every generation our knowledge of man grows more extensive and profound. That which Montesquieu was in his day, Frazer is in ours, and the difference in their work is an index to the progress of ideas.

To Frazer we are indebted for our widest and most recent knowledge of man. The title of anthropologist, which with us still retains a narrow connotation, takes on, in his case, the widest possible significance. He has enabled us to enter into the mind of the barbarians of to-day and of the remote past. He has cast a fresh light on that Greek and Latin antiquity with which we deemed ourselves familiar. For the fairy tales which man invented to explain his own origin, he has substituted the initial data of an exact science which did not so much as exist before his time.

A severe critic of himself, he has created a method as scrupulous as it is sure, and he has thus added one more to the instruments man

is always painfully forging to bring himself a little nearer to the truth.

But it is not for me to describe to the public the great work which Sir James George Frazer has achieved. It is already a distinction beyond my deserts that I should introduce to the friends of Science, of the Arts and of Beauty, the fine essays which follow and which remind us of the recreations with which Renan beguiled his leisure.

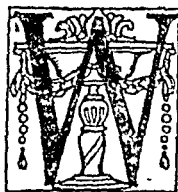


## LES PLAISIRS ET LES JOURS

*In this preface to one of Marcel Proust's earliest books Anatole France speaks in terms of high eulogy of the author. His views subsequently underwent considerable modification.*

# LES PLAISIRS ET LES JOURS

BY MARCEL PROUST



WHY did he ask me to stand sponsor to his book, and why did I promise to undertake that very pleasant but quite superfluous task? His book is like a young poet, full of rare and delicate charm. It bears with it its own commendation; it pleads its own cause and offers itself in its own despite.

Of course it is young. It is young with the author's own youthfulness. But it is old too, as old as the world. It is the leafage of springtime on the ancient branches of the age-old forest; yet it might be said that the fresh shoots sadden over the immemorial past of the woods and robe themselves in sorrow for so many dead springs.

To the goatherds of Helicon, the grave Hesiod sang the *Works and Days*. It would be a sadder task to sing *The Pleasures and Days* to the fashionable men and women of our times, if there be any truth in the saying of that English statesman who averred that "life would be tolerable were it not for its pleasures." And so our young friend's book shows smiles tinged with languor, attitudes of fatigue which are not devoid of beauty or nobility.

In its sadness it will touch many soft and divers chords, sustained as it is by a marvellous spirit of observation, by a penetrating and truly subtle intelligence. This calendar of the *Pleasures and Days* portrays alike the moods of nature by harmonious pictures of sky and sea and forest, and depicts the moods of man by faithful portraits and by *genre* paintings of wonderful minuteness.

Marcel Proust takes equal pleasure in describing the lonely splendours of the setting sun and the restless vanities of a worldly heart. He excels in the telling of exquisite

sorrows, of artificial sufferings, which are at least as cruel as those which Nature lavishes upon us with maternal generosity. I confess that these far-sought sufferings, these sorrows discovered by human ingenuity, these factitious griefs, strike me as wonderfully interesting and valuable, and I am grateful to Marcel Proust for having studied them and furnished a few choice examples.

He attracts us and holds us in an exotic atmosphere amid cultivated orchids whose strange and morbid beauty is nourished on no earthly soil. Suddenly through the heavy-scented air, there strikes a shaft of light, a flash which, like the ray of the German scientist, traverses the body. In an instant, with a single stroke, the poet has probed the hidden thought, the longing unavowed.

Such is his manner, his art. He displays in it a sureness of aim surprising in so young an archer. He is not in the least innocent. But so sincere is he, and so true, that he takes on a character of *naïveté*, and that in itself conveys a charm. In him there is something

of a depraved Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and an ingenuous Petronius.

Fortune has smiled on this book of his. It will fare on its way through the town adorned and perfumed with the flowers which Madeleine Lemaire has showered upon it with that divine hand which scatters both roses and the roses' dew.

## THE OARISTYS

*The following letter discussing the authenticity of an Idyll commonly attributed to Theocritus shows Anatole France in his happiest vein.*



## THE OARISTYS



HER MONSIEUR,

You think that I have found Theocritus again at Syracuse and you want me to talk to you about *The Oaristys*. But then these gardens of myrtle and orange trees hardly prompt me to learned studies. And what, after all, have I to tell you? I have seen the fountain Arethusa. It flows on between Italian terraces whose dank walls are peeling lamentably. Its waters disappear beneath the airy plumes of the papyrus, brought hither by the Arabs. But now, as in the days of Hiero, we can hear the song of the pine tree which, with its dark and pointed crest, pierces the clear blue sky.

Here in this island of Ortygia, fallen from its glory and its beauty, I have recognized the little satyr of your idyll. Daphnis to-day is

called Letterino. You may notice his curly hair which Theocritus likened to parsley. He has a face like the goatherd who vainly essayed to tempt the nymph Amaryllis with apples. He is small and dark. His skin wears the tawny hue of the rocks on which he lies stretched out in the sun. He has forgotten his rustic songs. He no longer has the skill to fashion a syrinx with seven pipes out of reeds and wax. I am assured, however, that he sings the song of the bee :

Lu cunusci lu mia amuri  
Nici mia di l'occhi beddi ?  
'Ntra di labri c'e un sapuri,  
'Na ducizza, chi mai speddi.

I had more trouble in recognizing the young girl whose girdle he is loosening. Now her fine wild eyes are sunken, and shine in a large circle of shadow. The fever of the marshes consumes her and chills her even here on this burning soil, where the grasshoppers sing their endless song. All along this languorous shore, where the nymphs were wont to steal by, it is now malaria which leaves

its trail. I brought away with me from Syracuse a sense of infinite sadness which is gradually effacing itself in the splendour of Palermo. Palermo is a beautiful slave whose masters, Moslems and Christians, Emirs, Norman Kings, Spanish Viceroy, have all adorned her in their turn. Bowed down with the weight of her jewels, she lies sleeping in the sun.

Since it is your wish, my dear sir, that I should speak to you of the Syracusan poet, I will tell you that the cultured and lettered Syracusans piously preserve his memory. At La Flora, fragrant alleys lead, between dark and gleaming foliage that flourishes with an African vigour, to a little rond-point where cenotaphs, in a style that would fain be antique but which betrays the taste of the early part of this century, are ranged in a circle beneath the cypresses. Some old academician, a lover of gardens and belles-lettres, caused them to be erected, less than a hundred years ago, to the *manes* of the philosophers, the poets and the savants who flourished in ancient Trinacria.

We may see there, among the monuments of Epicharmus and Empedocles, the shaft of a Dorian column with sharp arrises and no base, in imitation of the columns of Selinontes. An urn, placed thereon, bears the following inscription :

*Theocrito Syracusano, Bucolici Carminis Inventori.*

You will, like me, sir, have looked with pleasure on this monument and found something winning in its very childishness. But how could you have failed to notice in the Museum the antique bronze ram known as the ram of Syracuse, a thing to tempt the artistic greed of a Verres and worthy to inspire some descriptive epigram in the Anthology. The animal is couchant with its head in the air and a forefoot raised aloft. It is looking, listening, snuffing the air. One seems to scent with it the fragrant turf of the hills which slope down towards the sea ; one seems to see his ewes quietly grazing and then, suddenly appearing, the hornèd rival that troubles his repose ; for he is unquiet, and from his open mouth there

seems to issue a long, hoarse cry. His body is laden with thick wool. Such, no doubt, was the fleece which the poet rolled round the staff he offered to the chaste Theogénis. He is breathing, he is alive. You can see the tips of his expectant ears stretching in eager surprise. And he is a god-like ram. His muzzle is of heroic width, and his horns coiled round on each side of his head would be worthy to adorn the brows of Jupiter Ammon.

This ram of Syracuse seems to me like the symbol of the poetry of Theocritus, like the image of that broad and precise genius which, in little pictures wrought on a big scale, knew how to wed truth of movement with beauty of line.

Never believe that the maiden of your idyll, the daughter of Menalcas, who converses lovingly with the neatherd Daphnis, ever led to pasture beneath the grey olives a finer ram than that. But it is precisely here that I find myself brought up against a little difficulty with regard to *The Oaristys*. The poet certainly says, in line 67, that the young girl

rose up from her furtive embraces to go and feed her sheep, but he had previously given us to understand that she was a goatherd.

I am not at all in a position to study *The Oaristys* with any degree of exactitude. This little poem, which you rightly love, gives rise to doubts more grave than that which I have just raised. Perhaps you have been told that I am inclined to be a doubter. It is a thing I am sometimes reproached with. Believe me, if I deserve it, it was because I have tried to clasp certitude too closely to my bosom. Often the truth we pursue is a *Biblis* that slips between our fingers. I confess to you that I am not at all sure that *The Oaristys* belongs to Theocritus. Some good philosophers deny it, you know, for several reasons. One of the reasons is, I believe, that Venus is designated in this little poem by the name of Paphian, which is found in no poem attributed to Theocritus. Another ground is that the language of *The Oaristys*, singular in places, is not exempt from affectation and plays upon words. I shall not have the impertinence to

pronounce an opinion on this subject. If I were in Paris, I should go and consult my learned confrère at the Institute, M. Henri Weil, and ask him for his view on this difficult question. You know that the delicious little group of poems that has come down to us under the name of Theocritus is made up of pieces very diverse in tone and style and dialect. *The Oaristys* keeps well its place there. André Chénier thought so much of this little idyll that he wrote an imitation of it, which, however, is not very happy. You will earn gratitude, cher monsieur, in offering this piece to your bibliophiles. There is wit in it ; there is also nature.

For the rest, I know your designs, I know that you have only chosen *The Oaristys* as a subject for gracious “ motifs ” and to beguile our waiting moments ; I know that you are preparing to give us *The Syracusans*, a poem in which there shines the truth, a perfect work of Theocritus. But you needed time to get the documents together. For you wish to illustrate *The Syracusans* after those painted

vases and those figurines of terra-cotta on which the genius of the potters has marked the imprint of Hellenic life.

Excuse these disconnected words and receive from the traveller the ancient salutation, "Be of good cheer."

THE END



A COMPLETE LIST OF THE ENGLISH  
TRANSLATIONS OF THE WORKS OF  
**ANATOLE FRANCE**

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# ANATOLE FRANCE



OR nearly half a century the name of Anatole France has stood in the estimation of the world for all that is most exquisite and most refined in the French language; he has exerted over the minds of his own and succeeding generations an intellectual influence second to none, and he has enjoyed a prestige comparable only to that

of Voltaire. He is a devoted lover of the Muses, and if he professes no philosophy, no creed, it is because he has tried them all and discovered none that will unravel the master-knot of human fate. Nevertheless, in the course of this journey we call Life, this pilgrimage, the *whence* and *whither* of which are enveloped in obscurity, we shall find him a highly agreeable companion. He is never dictatorial and never in a hurry. He is, in fact, much given to loitering, and if a by-way tempts him, he will readily leave the high road to explore it. He will tell many a diverting story of saint and sinner, and many of folk who were neither the one nor the other, but a blend of both, like the majority of us. His polished, urbane discourse, rich with the spoils of Time, though always amusing and profitable, is not invariably what pious folk call "edifying." In that respect he resembles Shakespeare, Rabelais and Sterne. He is prodigiously learned, but he will never bore you with a display of erudition. He is too great to be merely clever, too wise to be dogmatic. He is indulgent to all men, save the fanatics. Fanatics he detests, because they are the sworn enemies of Beauty, and in his eyes the only unpardonable sins are the sins against Beauty.

Anatole France sees life steadily, and sees it whole. With the insight of genius he can enter into the state of mind and speak with the tongue appropriate to all his characters, from the highest to the lowest—scholar, politician, priest, soldier, voluptuary, wanton, all the motley *dramatis personæ* that move across the stage of life.

## ANATOLE FRANCE

Those who have come under the spell of Anatole France and are conscious of his peculiar charm, know instinctively that, when his voice is hushed, such accents will never fall upon their ears again. There will doubtless be born other writers whose work will be no less illumined by grace and beauty, but it will be a different grace, a different beauty. And the reason perhaps is that, in nearly all his writings, certainly in all those by which he will be chiefly held in memory, he gives utterance not so much to the mere results of some intellectual process, but rather to the dictates of his whole nature, heart and mind indissolubly interwoven, and, if the language he employs is the language of France, his voice is the voice of all humanity.

In an illuminating article recently published in the *Quarterly Review*, Mr. George Saintsbury, the greatest living English authority on French literature, says that to him "M. France has continued to appear as a new embodiment, Avatar, exponent, or anything else you please, of French style—as giving the quintessence thereof." He adds that "almost always he is a Master of the Laugh; and Heaven only knows what Earth would do without Laughter."

Looking back over the progress of Anatole France's popularity with English-speaking readers, it is an interesting fact that from the outset The Bodley Head has stood sponsor to him in this country. His work was known only to comparatively few here till Maurice Baring published his fine survey of it in Volume V of the *Yellow Book* (April, 1895), and it was this same volume which contained a contribution from Anatole France's own pen. Then followed various translations, culminating in the splendid Library Edition issued from The Bodley Head under the editorship first of the late Frederic Chapman and then of James Lewis May. The first volumes of this edition were issued in 1908, and the editors were fortunate in securing the services of an exceptionally brilliant group of translators, who succeeded so remarkably in rendering the spirit as well as the letter of their original that this series gradually established the reputation of Anatole France among English readers.

In 1923, encouraged by the success of the Library Edition, and feeling that there was still a wide public to whom that edition was inaccessible at seven shillings and sixpence, the publisher decided to embark upon a new and cheaper edition, at half a crown in cloth binding and five

## ANATOLE FRANCE

shillings in leather binding, and during that year several volumes at the lower prices were issued. This new edition has been an unqualified success. It is everywhere spoken of as a real service to the cause of literature, and it is introducing Anatole France's work to thousands of new readers. Its attractive page, binding and appearance are earning it especial praise; and new volumes are being added regularly and will continue till the edition is complete.

On October 12th, 1924, Anatole France passed away in his 81st year. So numerous were the tributes which appeared in the English press that it is difficult to give an adequate idea of the impression Anatole France's work has made upon the best literary minds of this country, but perhaps the following sentence from an article in the *Evening Standard* is the most apposite summing-up of Anatole France's position: "He was not only the greatest name in French literature in our time, but he was perhaps the greatest name in European literature, for though other authors have been more widely read during the last generation, none has been more admired than he."

The works of Anatole France are a liberal education; not to have read them is to be ignorant of a great figure, not only in modern letters, but in the whole history of literature.

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